

# The Prince

[Epistle Dedicatory]  
*Nicolaus Maclavellus ad Magnificum  
Laurentium Medicem*  
(Niccolò Machiavelli to the Magnificent  
Lorenzo dei Medici)

Most of the time, those who desire to acquire favor with a prince are accustomed<sup>1</sup> to approaching him with those among their things which they hold most dear, or which they see him take pleasure in, which is why one often sees horses, arms, cloths of gold, precious stones, and similar ornaments worthy of their greatness being presented to them. Therefore, I, desiring to offer myself to your magnificence with some testimony of my services to it,<sup>2</sup> have not found among the goods of my house anything that I hold dearer or that I esteem as much as the understanding of the actions of great men, learned by long experience with modern things and by continuous reading of ancient ones which I, having thought out at length and examined with great diligence and now reduced to a small volume, send to your Magnificence. And, even though I judge this work unworthy of the latter's presence, *tamen*<sup>3</sup> I trust enough that it must be acceptable to it because of its<sup>4</sup> humaneness, considering that no greater gift could be made

1. The verb *sogliono* (third pers. pl., act.) is usually translated as an adverb, e.g., "commonly," "customarily." Sometimes it is even rendered as "it is customary." Modern Spanish and Italian have words related to it, but not English. The word is related both to the Latin *solium*, which means throne or seat of power, and to *solito*, usual. It conveys the sense of an ingrained habit, and a proper one at that. The closest English word is "wont."

2. *Questa*, referring directly to Lorenzo's Magnificence, and only indirectly to Lorenzo. Although Lorenzo may confuse his Magnificence with himself, Machiavelli does not.

3. Nevertheless (Lat.). Machiavelli's use of words and phrases in Latin, the language of the Church, of authority and solemnity, is not casual. The reader should ask why, at any given point in the work, Machiavelli chooses to endow an example, a noun, an adjective, or a mere conjunction with the aura of Latin.

4. *Sua* refers to magnificence (feminine in Italian) and —indirectly— to Lorenzo de' Medici. Humaneness was frequently used to indicate courteous goodness.

to it than to give it<sup>5</sup> the possibility of being able to perceive<sup>6</sup> in a very short time all that I have come to know in many years and with many personal discomforts and dangers. Which work I have neither adorned nor filled with expansive expressions, or with pompous and magnificent words, or with whatever other allurements or extrinsic ornamentation with which many are used to describe and adorn their things; because I have wanted either that no thing honor it, or that the nature of the treatment and the weight of the subject matter alone make it acceptable. Nor do I want that it be reputed a presumption if a man of low and base estate dares to discuss and judge the government of princes, because, just as those who draw countrysides place themselves low in the plains to consider the mountains and high places, and they place themselves high upon mountains to consider the low ones, similarly, to know well the nature of peoples one needs to be a prince, and to know well that of princes one needs to be of the people.

Let your magnificence therefore take this little gift in the spirit in which I send it; which, if it be diligently considered and read by it,<sup>7</sup> it will know therein an extreme desire of mine, that it<sup>8</sup> might come to that greatness which fortune and your other qualities promise. And, if your magnificence from the apex of your height sometime will direct the eyes to these low places, it will know how undeservedly I bear a great and continuing malignity of fortune.

5. Machiavelli writes the impersonal pronoun *li* rather than the personal pronoun *le*. *Li* can refer to magnificence or to Lorenzo. Had he used *le*, the reference would have been unambiguously to Lorenzo. Machiavelli is a master of purposeful imprecision.

6. *Intendere*, which is what Machiavelli offers to Lorenzo and what I translate as “to perceive,” implies a less complete grasp of the subject than *conoscere*, “to know,” which Machiavelli claims to have done himself. Note, for example, the common expression *dare da intendere*, which means to “pass off” or “to fool.” On the other side of the argument, note that the expression *intendersene* means to be well practiced in a discipline. Here, context argues for the former interpretation.

7. I.e., by that magnificence.

8. I.e., that same magnificence.

# I

## *Quot sint principatuum et quibus modis sint acquirantur*

(Of how many kinds are principalities,  
and in what ways they are acquired)

All the states<sup>9</sup> and all the dominions which have had and have lordship<sup>10</sup> over men have been and are either republics or principalities. And the principalities are either hereditary, where the bloodline of their lord have been princes for a long time, or they are new. And the new ones either are all new, as Milan was to Francesco Sforza,<sup>11</sup> or they are like members added to the hereditary estate of the prince who acquires them, as is the kingdom of Naples to the king of Spain.<sup>12</sup> These dominions thus acquired are either habituated<sup>13</sup> to live under a prince or used to being free; and they are acquired either with others' arms or with one's own, either by fortune or by virtue.

9. *Stato* means both personal station and state in the modern sense. *The Prince* is about both.

10. *Imperio* here certainly does not mean "empire" as a kind of government, but rather lordship or power.

11. In 1450 Francesco Sforza killed Milan's Ambrosian Republic (Ambrose is Milan's patron saint), which had arisen after the death of Filippo Visconti.

12. Ferdinand the Catholic acquired Naples through the Treaty of Blois in 1504.

13. *Consueti* connotes passivity and rest.

## II

### *De principatibus hereditariis* (Of hereditary principalities)

I will leave aside reasoning of republics, because I reasoned of them at length on another occasion.<sup>14</sup> I will turn only to the principality, and I will go weaving the aforesaid warp, and I will debate how these principalities may be governed and maintained.

I say, then, that there are far smaller difficulties involved in maintaining states hereditary and inured to the bloodline of their prince than in the new ones, because it suffices not to break off the orders of one's ancestors, and then to temporize with accidents: so that, if such a prince is of ordinary industriousness, he will always maintain himself in his state, if there is not an extraordinary and excessive force that deprives him of it; and, though he might become a private man, whatever disaster the occupier might have, he reacquires it.

We have in Italy *in exemplis*<sup>15</sup> the duke of Ferrara, who did not succumb to the attacks of the Venetians in '84, nor to those of Pope Julius in '10, for any other reason than for being in that dominion for ages. Because the natural prince has smaller cause and smaller need to offend: from which it follows<sup>16</sup> that he is likely to be more loved; and, if extraordinary vices do not make him hated, it is reasonable that he be naturally well regarded by his own. And the memories and causes<sup>17</sup> of the innovation are extinguished in antiquity and contrivance of rule: because one change always leaves the indentations for the building of another.

14. *Discourses*, Book I.

15. Latin, "for example." The reference is to the Dukes Ercole and Alfonso I d'Este, who fought both the pope and Venice from 1482 to 1513.

16. *Conviene*. The verb *convenire* has meanings which range from custom to convention to appropriate necessity. In philosophical discourse, "convention" is opposed to "nature." Machiavelli's frequent and frequently ambiguous use of the family of words which stem from *convenire* is especially interesting because he sought to reverse the order of importance that the Western philosophical tradition attributes to natural-divine order, and to human will.

17. *Cagioni* here means the causes of resentment, that is, the injuries that, according to Machiavelli, necessarily accompany any political innovation. Habitual acceptance of any order hides the fact that it is built on violence.

### III

## *De principatibus mixtis* (Of mixed principalities)

But the difficulties are in the new principality. And first, if it is not all new, but like an appendage,<sup>18</sup> so that altogether it can be called almost mixed, changes within it spring from a natural difficulty, which is in all new principalities: which is that men willingly change lords believing to improve; and this belief makes them take up arms against him,<sup>19</sup> about which they deceive themselves, because then they see by experience that they have worsened, which follows from another natural and ordinary<sup>20</sup> necessity, which makes it so that one always need offend those whose new prince one becomes, both with men-at-arms and with unnumbered other injuries which the new acquisition pulls along behind itself; so that you<sup>21</sup> have for enemies all those you have offended in occupying that principality, and you cannot keep as friends those who have put you there, being unable to satisfy them in that way which they had presupposed, and being unable to use strong medicines against them, since you are obliged to them; because always, one has need of the provincials' favor in order to enter into a province, though one be most powerful with armies. For these reasons Louis XII of France occupied Milan at once, and at once he lost it;<sup>22</sup> and the first time Ludovico's forces<sup>23</sup> sufficed to take it from him; because the people who had opened doors to him, finding themselves deceived of their opinion and of that future good which they had set before themselves, could not bear the annoyances of the new prince.

It is indeed true that upon acquiring countries that have revolted for the second time, they are lost with more difficulty; because the lord, having

18. *Membro*, a member, a limb, one body politic added to another.

19. Referring to the lord. But in thinking that a new lord will be better, they deceive themselves.

20. *Ordinario*, meaning both "common" and also "pertaining to the order of things."

21. Familiar form, singular.

22. Gained in October 1499, lost in February 1500.

23. Ludovico (il Moro) Sforza took Milan in February 1500. Louis XII retook it in April but lost it in April 1502, after he was defeated by the Holy League of Pope Julius II.

taken the occasion of the rebellion, is less respectful<sup>24</sup> as he makes himself secure by punishing offenders, clearing up suspicions, providing for himself in his weakest parts. So that, if to make France lose Milan the first time it sufficed that one Duke Ludovico rumble on the borders, to make it lose [Milan] the second time it was necessary to have the whole world against him, and his armies extinguished or chased out of Italy; which sprang from the above-mentioned causes. Nonetheless, it was taken from him both the first and the second time. The general causes of the first have been discussed; it remains now to tell those of the second, and so to see what remedies were available to him, and which someone who might be in his condition can have in order to be able to maintain himself in his acquisition better than France did. I say consequently that these states, which, being acquired, are added onto a state belonging of old to him who acquires, are either of the same province and of the same tongue or they are not. When they be, it is easy to keep them, especially when they are not used to living free; and to possess them securely it suffices to have extinguished the line of the prince who dominated them, because otherwise, if their old conditions are maintained and there is not disparity of customs, men live quietly; as it has been seen that Burgundy, Brittany, Gascony, and Normandy have done, which have been with France for a long time; despite there being disparity of language, nonetheless the customs are similar, and they can mutually carry on among themselves. And whoever acquires them, wanting to keep them, must have two cares: one, that the bloodline of the old prince be extinguished; the other, not to alter either their laws or their taxes; so that in a very brief time it becomes all one body with their old principality.

But when one acquires states in a province of disparate tongues, customs, and orders, here are the difficulties, and here one needs to have great fortune and great industriousness to keep them; and one of the greatest and most lively remedies would be that the person who acquires them might go there to live. This would make the possession more secure and more durable; as did the Turk in Greece;<sup>25</sup> who, [even] with all the other orders observed by him to keep that state, if he had not gone to live there, it was not possible that he keep it. Because, being there, one sees the disorders being born and you can remedy that quickly; [when one is] not living there, one perceives them when they are [already] great and when there is no more

24. The word used is *respetti*, meaning less scrupulous. *Suspetti*, later in the sentence, means both suspects and suspicions.

25. The Turks conquered the Balkan peninsula in 1453 and made Constantinople the capital of their entire empire.



remedy. Beyond this, the province is not despoiled by your officials; the subjects are satisfied with recourse to the prince close by; for which reason, if they want to be good, they have more cause for loving him and, if they want to be otherwise, for fearing him. Whatever foreigner might want to attack that state has greater respect<sup>26</sup> for it, so that, living there, he can lose it with very great difficulty.

The other better remedy is to send colonies into one or two places that may be the fetters to that state;<sup>27</sup> because it is necessary either to do this or to keep enough men-at-arms and infantry there. One does not spend much on colonies and he<sup>28</sup> sends them there without expense to himself, or little, and only offends those from whom he takes the fields and the houses, to give to the new inhabitants, who are a miniscule part of the state<sup>29</sup>; and those whom he offends, remaining dispersed and poor, can never harm him; and all the others remain by one side unharmed, and for this reason should keep quiet, fearful lest they err, for fear that it not happen to them as to those who have been despoiled. I conclude that these colonies do not cost, are more reliable, and offend less; and the offended ones cannot do harm, being poor and dispersed, as is said. By way of which, one has to note that men must either be caressed<sup>30</sup> or extinguished; because they avenge themselves of light offenses, but of the grave ones they cannot. So the offense one does to a man must be such that one not fear vengeance for it.<sup>31</sup> But in keeping men-at-arms there instead of colonies, one spends much more, having to expend all the income of the state on guarding it, so that the acquisition becomes a net loss, and it<sup>32</sup> offends much more, because it does harm to all that state, changing his army by quartering it;<sup>33</sup> the discomfort of which everyone feels, and each one becomes his enemy; and they are enemies who

26. Here “respect” means reticence, and “it” refers to attacking.

27. The literal translation of *compedi* (translated as “key”) is “leg irons” or “fetters.” The image is of places by whose possession a prince can hold a country in the way that leg irons hold a man.

28. I.e., the prince does not spend much on colonies. The prince sends them out with little expense to himself.

29. Referring to those whose fields and houses were taken.

30. Another connotation of *vezzeggiare* is “to humor.” The contemporary political term “stroking” captures the essence of it.

31. Cf. *Discourses* III:6: “He who is dead cannot think of vengeance.”

32. “It” refers to relying on men-at-arms instead of colonies.

33. “Tramutando con li alloggiamenti el suo esercito” means changing his army (for the worse) by keeping it in quarters, as an occupation force.



can do him harm, [because they] remain in their own homes, though beaten. From all sides, therefore, this [method of] guarding<sup>34</sup> is useless, as that of the colonies is useful.

In a different province he must also, as has been said, make himself chief and defender of the less powerful neighbors, and scheme to weaken the powerful and look out lest by some accident a foreigner as powerful as himself enter there. And it will always happen that he<sup>35</sup> will be put there by those in it who will be malcontent, either because of too much ambition or because of fear; as was earlier seen when the Aetolians put the Romans into Greece; and in every other province they entered, they<sup>36</sup> were put there by the provincials. And the order of things<sup>37</sup> is that when a powerful foreigner enters a province, all the less powerful within it adhere to him, moved by envy against whomever has been placed over them; so much so that he need make no effort at all to gain these lesser powers, because all together immediately lump themselves<sup>38</sup> with the state he has acquired there. He has only to see to it<sup>39</sup> that they not take on too much strength and too much authority; and in order to remain fully the arbiter of that province, he can easily lower those who are powerful with his own forces and with their<sup>40</sup> favor. And whoever will not play this role<sup>41</sup> well, will soon lose that which he will have acquired, and, while he has it, he will have numberless difficulties and annoyances therein.

The Romans played this role<sup>42</sup> well in the provinces they took and sent the colonies, entertained the less powerful without increasing their power, lowered the powerful, and did not allow powerful foreigners to gain a

34. The word is *guardia*, meaning guard. But the context points both to the relative uselessness of the guard troops and to the usefulness of "that" (all the colonies) which have no guard troops but which are themselves something which guard the conquest.

35. Refers to any foreign prince who acquires new territory.

36. The Romans.

37. The natural order of things.

38. The word is *globo*, "globe" ("fanno uno globo col suo stato"), but the meaning is "make common cause" or "jump on the bandwagon."

39. *Pensare*, literally, to think.

40. That is, "the less powerful ones'."

41. Literally, "will not govern this part well." The word *parte* here certainly does not indicate a place, but rather that portion of the art of governing just delineated, and the advice he has given upon it.

42. *Parti* here has the same meaning as in the previous usage.

reputation there. And I want the province of Greece alone to suffice as an example. The Achaeans and the Aetolians were entertained by them, the kingdom of the Macedonians was lowered, Antioch was chased out of there; nor did the merits of the Achaeans or of the Aetolians ever cause them<sup>43</sup> to permit them<sup>44</sup> to add to any state; nor did the persuasions of Philip ever induce them to be his friend without lowering him; nor could the power of Antioch make them consent to his keeping any state in that province. Because in these cases the Romans did what all wise princes must do, who have to have an eye<sup>45</sup> not only on present disorders but on future ones as well, and have to avoid the latter with all industriousness: because, by providing for oneself beforehand, one can remedy them easily, but if one waits until they draw close, the medicine is not on time, because the illness has become incurable. And of this, it happens as the physicians say of the Etico,<sup>46</sup> which in the beginning of its malignity<sup>47</sup> is easy to cure and difficult to know, but in the progression of time, not having known it at the beginning nor medicated it, it becomes easy to know and difficult to cure. So it happens in the things of state; because, knowing far-off (which is not given except to the prudent) the evils<sup>48</sup> which are borne in it, one quickly cures them, but, not having known them, one allows them to grow so that anyone knows them, there is no longer any remedy for them.

Therefore,<sup>49</sup> the Romans, seeing inconveniences from afar, always remedied them and never let them go on in order to run from a war, because they knew that one does not escape war, but one defers it to the advantage of others; therefore, they wanted to make war on Philip and Antioch in Greece, in order not to have to do it in Italy; and they could have avoided both for a while, which they did not choose to do. Nor did that which is all day long in the mouths of the wise of our times ever please them, namely, to enjoy the

43. The Romans.

44. The Romans sought the alliance of the Aetolian League against Philip of Macedonia and the Achaean League. After these powers were defeated in 197 B.C., the Romans turned on their allies and defeated them in 190 B.C.

45. *Riguardo*, i.e., have to keep an eye out for.

46. This word has two entirely different meanings. The indicated one is a consumptive disease, usually translated "Aetolian fever." The other is "ethics." A pun would hardly be out of character.

47. *Male* means illness, as well as evil and bad.

48. *Mali*, evils or illnesses.

49. In the sixteenth century *però*, "however," also meant *perciò*, "therefore."

fruits<sup>50</sup> of time, but rather those<sup>51</sup> of their virtue and prudence; because time pushes everything before it and can bring with it good as well as evil, and evil as well as good.

But let us return to France and examine whether it has done any of the things said; and I will speak of Louis and not of Charles, whose proceedings have been better seen because he has held possessions in Italy longer; and you<sup>52</sup> will see how he did the contrary of those things which must be done in order to keep a differently constituted state.

King Louis was put into Italy by the ambition of the Venetians, who wanted to earn for themselves half the state of Lombardy by his coming. I do not want to blame the part<sup>53</sup> taken by the king; because, wanting to begin to put one foot into Italy and not having friends in this province — on the contrary, all doors being closed to him by the behavior of King Charles<sup>54</sup> — he was forced to take what friendships he could: and his venture would have succeeded had he made no errors at all in the other maneuvers. Having conquered Lombardy, the king instantly re-earned the reputation Charles had taken from him: Genoa yielded; Florentines became his friends; marquis of Mantova, duke of Ferrara, Bentivogli, madonna of Forli, lord of Faenza, of Pesaro, of Rimini, of Camerino, of Piombino, Luccans, Pisans, Sienese, all approached him to be his friend. And then the Venetians were able to consider the temerity of the choice<sup>55</sup> they had made; they who, to acquire two pieces of land in Lombardy, had made the king lord of two-thirds of Italy.

Let one now consider with how little difficulty the king could have kept his reputation in Italy if he had observed the aforesaid rules and kept all those friends of his secure and defended, who were always in need of staying with him, being numerous and weak, some fearful of the Church and others of the Venetians, and by means of them he could easily have assured himself of whoever remained great there. But he was no sooner in Milan

50. *Beneficio* means literally “blessings” or “profit.”

51. Referring to “blessings.”

52. Plural.

53. That is, the king’s strategy vis-à-vis Venice. Louis XII promised Venice the city of Cremona and the valley of the Adda River in exchange for Venice’s help.

54. In 1495, Charles VIII had been fought by a coalition of Venice, Milan, Florence, Naples, Mantua, Spain, and the Holy Roman Empire.

55. *Partito*, literally, “party,” can mean side, choice, opinion, and even enterprise or quarrel. It is rendered as *decision* in the next paragraph. (“Nor did he realize that with this decision . . .”)

than he did the contrary, giving aid to Pope Alexander so that he might occupy Romagna. Nor did he realize that with this decision he was making himself weak, taking from himself friends and those who had thrown themselves on his lap, and making the Church great, adding so much that is temporal to the spiritual which already gives it so much authority. And, first having made one error, he was constrained to keep on doing such until, he was forced to come into Italy to put an end to the ambition of Alexander, to prevent him from becoming lord of Tuscany. It did not suffice him to have made the Church great and to have taken his friends from himself so that,<sup>56</sup> since he wanted the Kingdom of Naples, he divided it with the king of Spain; and whereas he had been earlier, the arbiter of Italy, he put a partner there, so that the ambitious of that province and those unhappy with him might have a recourse; and whereas he could have left in that kingdom a king who was his own client, he took such a one out in order to put in one [king] who might chase him from it.<sup>57</sup>

To desire to acquire is truly something very natural and ordinary, and always, when men do it who can, they will be lauded, or not blamed; but when they cannot, and want to do it anyway, here is the error and the blame. If France therefore was able to attack Naples with its forces, it should have done so. If it was not able, it should not have divided it. And, if the division of Lombardy which he made with the Venetians merited excuse, because by means of it he put a foot in Italy, this merits blame, since it was not excused by that necessity.

Therefore, Louis had made these five errors: extinguished the lesser powers; increased in Italy the power of a powerful one; brought in a most powerful foreigner; did not come to live there; did not put colonies there. Which errors still, with him alive, might not have harmed him, had he not made the sixth: to take the state from the Venetians; because, had he not made the Church great nor put Spain into Italy, it would have been good and reasonable<sup>58</sup> and necessary to lower them; but having made these choices,<sup>59</sup>

56. "that." Between the commas Machiavelli writes only one word, *che*, meaning literally "so that." The implication is that Louis was so stupid as to compound a serious error with an even worse error.

57. In other words, fearing that Pope Alexander would take Tuscany, the king of France was forced to invade Italy. But he made another mistake. He shared Naples with the king of Spain, who became the natural recourse of anti-French sentiment and potentially fatal to French interests in Italy.

58. *ben ragionevole*.

59. *Decisions* translated from *partito* again.

he should never have consented to their<sup>60</sup> ruin; because, those<sup>61</sup> being powerful, they would always have kept others from trying to take Lombardy, whether because the Venetians would not have consented to such an enterprise without their becoming lords of it, whether because the others would not have wanted to take it from France to give it to them, and would not have had the spirit to go and bash against them both. And if someone were to say: King Louis yielded Romagna to Alexander and the kingdom<sup>62</sup> to Spain in order to avoid a war, I answer with the reasons said above: that one must never allow a disorder to continue in order to avoid a war; because it is not avoided but is deferred to your disadvantage. And if some others were to bring up the faith<sup>63</sup> that the king had given to the pope, to do that enterprise for him in exchange for the dissolution of his marriage and the hat<sup>64</sup> of Rouen; I answer with that which will be said by me below about the faith of princes and how one should observe it. King Louis thus lost Lombardy because he failed to observe any of the terms observed by others who took provinces and wanted to keep them. Nor is this any miracle, but very ordinary and reasonable. And I spoke of this matter with Rouen at Nantes, when Valentino — for thus Cesare Borgia, son of Pope Alexander, was commonly known — was occupying Romagna: because the cardinal of Rouen was telling me that the Italians were not competent in war, I answered him that the French are not competent in state; because if they were, they would not leave the Church in such greatness. And through experience it has been seen that the greatness in Italy, both of the latter and of Spain, has been caused by France, and its ruin<sup>65</sup> caused by them. From which one draws a general rule, which never or rarely fails: that whoever is the cause of one becoming powerful, is ruined; because that power is caused by him either by industriousness or by force, and both of these are suspect to whomever has become powerful.

60. The Venetians'.

61. The Venetians.

62. of Naples.

63. I.e., the pledge. Note Machiavelli's forced use of the word *faith* to describe an ordinary political deal involving the Church.

64. A cardinal's hat.

65. Italy's ruin.

#### IV

*Cur Darii regnum quod Alexander  
occupaverat a successoribus suis post  
Alexandri mortum non defecit*

(Why the kingdom of Darius, which  
was occupied by Alexander, did not  
defect from his successors after  
Alexander's death)

Considering the difficulty one has in keeping a newly acquired state, one could marvel whence it sprang that Alexander the Great became lord of Asia in a few years and, having only just occupied it, died; whence it seemed reasonable that all that state might rebel; nonetheless, Alexander's successors kept it for themselves, and had no other difficulties in keeping it than that which sprang up among themselves because of their own ambition. I answer that the principalities of which one has memory are governed in two different ways: either by a prince while all the other are servants, and by those who, as ministers, help to govern that kingdom by his grace and concession; or by one prince and by barons, who hold that rank not by the grace of the lord but because of the antiquity of their bloodlines. Such barons have their own states and subjects, who recognize them as lords and have natural affection for them. Those states which are governed by one prince and by servants, have a prince with greater authority; because in all the province no one but him is recognized as superior and, if they obey any other, they do it as minister and official,<sup>66</sup> and do not bear him particular love.

The examples of these two kinds of governments in our time are the Turk and the king of France. All the monarchy of the Turk is governed by one lord: the others are his servants: and, distinguishing his kingdom into

66. That is, they obey him because of the office to which the prince has appointed him, not because of who he is.



Sanjaks,<sup>67</sup> he sends different administrators there, and shifts and changes them as it pleases him. But the king of France is placed in the middle of an ancient multitude of lords recognized in that state by their subjects and loved by them: they have their preeminences: the king cannot take them away without danger to himself. Therefore, whoever considers both these states will find difficulty in acquiring the state of the Turk but, be it won, great ease in keeping it.<sup>68</sup> The causes of the difficulties involved in occupying the kingdom of the Turk are the impossibility of being called into it by the princes of that kingdom. Nor can one hope to facilitate the enterprise through the rebellion of those he has around him: which springs from the aforesaid reasons. Because they are all enslaved and obligated to him, they can be corrupted with greater difficulty; and, even when they be corrupted, one can hope little of them that is useful, since they are unable to carry the peoples with them for the reasons indicated. Therefore, whoever attacks the Turk must think of finding him united; and he had better<sup>69</sup> hope more in his own forces than in the disorders of others. But if he be vanquished and broken in the field so that he is not able to remake armies, one has to fear nothing but the bloodline of the prince: which, once extinguished, no one is left to fear, the others not having credit<sup>70</sup> with the peoples: and, as the winner could not hope in them<sup>71</sup> before victory, so after it he does not have to fear them.

The contrary occurs in kingdoms governed like that of France, because you can enter there with ease, gaining for yourself some baron of the kingdom; because always one finds malcontents and some who want to innovate. These, for the said reasons, can open for you the way to that state and facilitate your victory; which thereafter, wanting to maintain yourself,

67. "distinguendo el suo regno in Sangiachi." The Sanjaks were the appointed governors of Turkish provinces, which also bore the name. Machiavelli does not say that the Turk *divided* his kingdom among his governors. The lines drawn on the map of a unitary state represent nothing more than the will of the sovereign. They are not *divisions* which in any way exist outside the sovereign's will. Therefore, when a sovereign so parcels his domain, he does not actually divide but merely *distinguishes*. Likewise, in our time the decentralization of centralized states must be understood very differently from the local liberties of true federal systems.

68. Some versions of the text continue: "thus on the contrary you will find for some reasons greater ease in occupying the state of France, but great difficulty in keeping it."

69. The expression is *Li conviene*, "it is convenient to him."

70. *Credito*, i.e., "credibility" or "standing."

71. The people.



entails infinite difficulties, both with those who have helped you and with those whom you have oppressed. Nor is it enough for you to extinguish the bloodline of the prince, because there remain those lords who make themselves heads of new efforts at change; and, not being able either to make them content or to extinguish them, you lose the state whenever the occasion comes.

Now, if you<sup>72</sup> will consider what kind of government was that of Darius, you<sup>73</sup> will find it similar to the kingdom of the Turk; and therefore it was necessary for Alexander first to strike it all and take the field from it; after which victory, Darius being dead, that state remained secure for Alexander for the above mentioned reasons. And his successors, had they been united, could have enjoyed it lazily: nor did other tumults spring up in that kingdom than those which they themselves raised up. But it is impossible to possess with such quiet states ordered like that of France. From this sprang the frequent rebellions of Spain, of France, and of Greece against the Romans, because of the thick<sup>74</sup> principalities that were in those states; while the memory of which lasted, the Romans were always uncertain of their possession; but when the memory of them was extinguished by the power and long duration of the empire, they became their secure possessors. And thereafter, fighting among themselves, they<sup>75</sup> also were able each to carry with him part of those provinces, according to the authority he had taken therein; and since the bloodline of their ancient lord had been extinguished, these<sup>76</sup> recognized none but the Romans. Considering these things, therefore, no one will marvel at the ease which Alexander had in keeping the state of Asia, and of the difficulties that he and others have had in keeping what is acquired,<sup>77</sup> like Phyrus and many [others]. This springs not from the great or small virtue of the winner, but from the disparity of the subject matter.

72. Formal or plural "you."

73. Again, the formal usage.

74. *Spessi*, thick, in the sense that grass is thick. Earlier in this sentence, the adjective modifying rebellions is *spesse*, translated as "frequent."

75. The Romans.

76. Provinces.

77. Acquired, that is, in Europe.

*Quomodo administrandae sint civitates vel  
principatus, qui antequam occuparentur suis  
legibus vivebant*

(In what way are to be administered  
the cities or principalities which,  
before being occupied, lived by their  
own laws)

When the states which one acquires, as is said, are used to living with their laws and in liberty, there are three ways to keep them: the first, to ruin them; the other, to go to live there personally; the third, to let them live with their laws, taking from them an annuity and creating therein a state of the few which might keep it friendly to you. Because, that state being created by that prince, it knows that it cannot be without his friendship and power and must do everything to maintain him. And one more easily keeps a city used to living free through its citizens, assuming one wants to preserve it.

*In exemplis*<sup>78</sup> there are the Spartans and the Romans. The Spartans kept Athens and Thebes, creating a state of the few there; nonetheless, they lost them again. The Romans, to keep Capua, Carthage, and Numantia, undid them<sup>79</sup> and did not lose them. They wanted to keep Greece much in the way the Spartans had held it,<sup>80</sup> making it free and leaving its laws; and it did not succeed for them; so that they were constrained to undo many cities of that province in order to keep it. Because, in truth, there is no secure way to possess them other than ruin. And whoever becomes lord of a city ac-

78. Latin, "for example."

79. The Romans drew the plow over Carthage in 146 B.C. and over Numantia in 133. Capua, however, was wholly destroyed only in a sociopolitical sense in 211 B.C.

80. Sparta imposed the government of the "Thirty Tyrants" on Athens at the end of the Peloponnesian War in 404 B.C. Thrasybulus overthrew this regime in 403. Thebes had a like regime imposed on it in 382 B.C. and overthrew it in 379.

customed to living free and does not undo her, he may expect to be undone by her; because in rebellion it always has for a refuge the name of liberty and of its ancient orders; which one never forgets either because of the passage of time or because of [the ruler's] beneficence. And whatever one might do or provide, if one does not disunite or disperse the inhabitants, they do not forget that name nor those orders, and suddenly in every accident they come back; as did Pisa after a hundred years that she had been put in serfdom by the Florentines.<sup>81</sup> But when cities or provinces are used to living under a prince, and [when] that bloodline is extinguished, on the one hand being used to obeying, on the other not having the old prince, they do not agree to make [a prince] from among themselves; also, since they do not know how to live free, they are slower to take arms, and a prince can gain them and make sure of them with greater ease. But in the republics there is greater life, greater hate, more desire of vengeance; neither does it leave, nor can it let rest the memory of ancient liberty: so it is that the most certain path is to extinguish them or to live there.

81. Acquired in 1405, rebelled in 1494.

*De principatibus novis qui armis propriis et  
virtute acquiruntur*

(Of the new principalities which  
are acquired with one's own arms  
and virtue)

Let no one marvel if, in speaking of principalities wholly new in both prince and state,<sup>82</sup> I will point to very great examples; because since men almost always walk the paths beaten by others and go about their actions by imitation, unable either wholly to keep the ways of others or to add to the virtue of those whom you imitate, a prudent man must always enter by the paths beaten by great men and imitate those who have been most excellent, so that, if his own virtue does not reach it,<sup>83</sup> at least it might be able to yield some of its scent: and do like prudent archers who, the place where they intend<sup>84</sup> to wound seeming too far, and knowing how far the virtue of their bow reaches, aim much higher than the destined place, not to reach such height with their arrow, but in order to be able to attain their design<sup>85</sup> with the aid of such high aim. I say, therefore, that in wholly new principalities, where there is a new prince, there is more or less difficulty in maintaining them, according to whether he who acquires them is more or less virtuous. And because this event, becoming a prince from a private individual, presupposes either virtue or fortune, it seems that either of these things might partly mitigate many difficulties: nonetheless, whoever has stood<sup>86</sup> less on fortune has maintained himself more. It also makes for ease if the prince, not having other states, is constrained to come to live there

82. New with respect to dynasty and political organization.

83. The virtue of the great.

84. *Disegnano*, "design" or "scheme," third person plural.

85. *Disegno*, "design," here means "scheme." Note that Machiavelli does not use any of the many Italian words that connote narrow objectives, such as "target." His archer is aiming at comprehensive schemes.

86. Literally, "was" (*è stato*), meaning "has relied."

*personaliter*.<sup>87</sup> But to come to those who became princes by their own virtue and not because of them,<sup>88</sup> I say that the most excellent ones are Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, Theseus, and the like. And although one may not reason<sup>89</sup> of Moses, he having been a mere executor of the things which were ordered him by God, *tamen*<sup>90</sup> he must be admired *solum*<sup>91</sup> for that grace which made him worthy of speaking with God. But let us consider Cyrus and the others who acquired or founded kingdoms: you<sup>92</sup> will find them all admirable; and if their particular actions and orders are considered, they will appear not different from those of Moses, who had such a great preceptor.<sup>93</sup> *Et*<sup>94</sup> examining their actions and life, one does not see that they had other from fortune than the occasion, which gave them the matter into which they could introduce what form they liked; and without that occasion the virtue of their spirit would have extinguished itself, and without that virtue the occasion would have come in vain. It was therefore necessary for Moses to find the people of Israel, in Egypt, slaves and oppressed by the Egyptians, so that the former, in order to come out of servitude, might dispose themselves to follow him. For Romulus to become king of Rome and founder of that fatherland, it was necessary<sup>95</sup> that Romulus not be confined<sup>96</sup> in Alba, that he should have been exposed at birth.<sup>97</sup> It was

87. Latin, "personally." Notice the string of Latin terms that begins here. Machiavelli is highlighting a point with mock solemnity.

88. *Quelle*, "them," refers to "virtue" or "fortune." Note well: Machiavelli is counterposing "virtue" to the virtue by which private men become princes. Other texts have "fortune" instead of "them." This is a clear contraposition between one's own virtue and fortune.

89. The prohibition is stated in the subjunctive, "*non si debba ragionare*."

90. Latin, "nevertheless" or "despite the foregoing."

91. Latin, "alone" or "only." The mock solemnity is unmistakable.

92. Plural.

93. Namely, God.

94. Latin, "and." After God, more mock solemnity.

95. *Conveniva*. Here the verb *convenire* is used in the sense of necessary relationship. Machiavelli makes a wickedly humorous contrast with the other meaning of the word expressed by the third object of the sentence (fn. 97): It was "convenient" that Romulus be exposed at birth.

96. *Non capissi* (subjunctive), i.e., not be in a place capable of holding his greatness.

97. According to legend, a jealous king of Alba ordered the twins Romulus and Remus to be put out to die. A she-wolf found the babies in a swamp next to the Tiber, suckled them, and raised them. That spot, now in downtown Rome, has been known since

necessary that Cyrus should find the Persians discontented in the empire of the Medes, and the Medes soft and effeminate because of a long peace. Theseus could not demonstrate his virtue if he did not find the Athenians dispersed. These occasions consequently made these men happy, and their excellent virtue enabled them to recognize that occasion whence the fatherland was ennobled and became most happy.

Those who, by virtuous ways similar to these, become princes acquire the principality with difficulty but keep it with ease; and the difficulties they have in acquiring the principality spring in part from the new orders and modes that they are forced to introduce in order to found their state and their security. And it must be considered that nothing is more difficult to transact, nor more dubious to succeed, nor more dangerous to manage, than to make oneself chief to introduce new orders. Because the introducer has for enemies all those whom the old orders benefit, and has for lukewarm defenders all those who might benefit by the new orders. Which lukewarmness springs in part from the fear of adversaries who have the laws on their side, in part from the incredulity of men, who do not truly believe in new things if they do not see solid experience born of them. From which it follows that whenever those who are enemies have the occasion to attack, they do it in a partisan manner, while those others defend tepidly; so that alongside them one is imperiled. It is necessary to discuss this part well, however, to examine whether such innovators stand by themselves or depend on others; that is, if in order to accomplish such work they need to pray<sup>98</sup> or can truly force. In the first case they always end up badly and do not accomplish anything; but when they depend on their own [strength], then they are rarely imperiled. From this it comes that all armed prophets won and the unarmed came to ruin. Because, beyond the things said, the nature of peoples is variable; and it is easy to persuade them of something, but it is difficult to fix them in that persuasion. And therefore it is necessary<sup>99</sup> to be prepared so that, when they no longer believe, one might make them believe by force. Moses, Cyrus, Theseus, and Romulus would not have been able to make them observe their constitutions for long had they been unarmed; as in our

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the eighth century B.C. as the Lupercalia. Note Machiavelli's superciliousness: misfortunes, including being put out to die at birth, are supposed to be necessary occasions for the development of virtue. The point of Chap. VI, however, is to define the virtue of founders. This has everything to do with inflicting adversity, not suffering it.

98. *Preghino* means both to plead with or to convince men, and to pray to God. Machiavelli clearly intends the double meaning. The reader can see him chuckle as he wrote.

99. *Convienne*.

times happened<sup>100</sup> to Friar Girolamo Savonarola; who came to ruin in his new orders, as the multitude began not to believe them; and he did not have a way to hold firm those who had believed, nor to make the unbelievers believe. Because of this, such [unarmed prophets] have great difficulty in proceeding, and all dangers are in their way, and it is necessary<sup>101</sup> that they overcome them with virtue; but, having overcome them and, when they begin to be venerated, having extinguished those who envied their station,<sup>102</sup> they remain powerful, secure, honored, and happy.

To such high examples I want to add a minor example; but well<sup>103</sup> it has some proportion with the former; and I want that it suffice me for all other similar ones; and this is Hiero of Syracuse.<sup>104</sup> This private man became prince of Syracuse: neither did he get any more from fortune than the occasion; because, the Syracusans being oppressed, they elected him their captain; from which he merited to be made their prince. And he was of such virtue, *etiam*<sup>105</sup> while a private citizen, that he who writes of him says: “quod nihil illi deerat ad regnandum praeter regnum.”<sup>106</sup> This man extinguished the old militia, ordered a new one; left old friendships, took up new ones; and, as he came to have friendships and soldiers that were his own, was able to build every edifice on that foundation; all of which took him much effort to acquire and little to maintain.

100. Literally, “intervened.” Girolamo Savonarola (1452–1498), a Dominican priest who preached fiery sermons against the worldliness of Church and nobles, and who founded the Florentine Republic (1494–1498), was burned at the stake after the people grew tired of him and blamed him for their defeats.

101. *Convienne*.

102. Literally, “quality.” Power, security, honor, happiness come once they have snuffed out those who envied their “quality,” meaning their virtue or their qualitative status. Machiavelli is ambiguous.

103. *Bene*, also good.

104. Note the assertive tone. Hiero II (306–215 B.C.), one of Pyrrhus’s lieutenants, became chief of the Syracusan army and took over the city in 265. He is a textbook example of a tyrant. Earlier, Machiavelli had solemnly said that “the most excellent” founders were Moses, Cyrus, et al. and that the others’ ways were “not different” from Moses’s, who was God’s executor. But he said nothing about Moses’s nor anybody else’s virtue. Now he talks about the founders’ virtue and gives us only one example, which he wants to stand for “all other similar ones” — Hiero’s virtue is no different from Moses’s or God’s.

105. Latin, “as well.”

106. Latin, “It seemed that he lacked nothing to reign except a kingdom.” Again, solemnity. But the following sentence encapsulates Machiavelli’s understanding of political virtue.



## VII

### *De principatibus novis qui alienis armis et fortuna acquiruntur*

(Of new principalities that are acquired  
by means of the arms of others and  
by fortune)

Those private men who become princes by fortune alone do it with little effort but maintain themselves with much; and they have no difficulty on the way, because they fly there: but all the difficulties spring up when they are in place. And such are when a state is conceded to someone either for money or by the grace of him who concedes it: as happened to many in Greece, in the cities of Ionia and of the Hellespont, where they were made princes by Darius so that they might hold them for his safety and glory; as also those were made emperors who came to the emperorship from private station through the corruption of the soldiers. Such princes stand<sup>107</sup> simply upon the will and fortune of whoever conceded it to them, which are two most voluble and unstable things: and they do not know how and they have not the power to hold that rank: they do not know, because, if he is not a man of great genius and virtue, it is not reasonable that, having always lived in private fortune, he knows how to command; they cannot, because they do not have forces that might be friendly and faithful to them. Moreover, the states that come right away, like all other things of nature that are born and grow fast, cannot have their roots and connections,<sup>108</sup> so that the first ad-

107. The verb is *stare*, which means “to be” in particular, variable circumstances, like the Spanish verb *estar*. The image is of princes who stand on precarious footing.

108. The word *barbe* literally means “beards.” Farmers use it to refer to fine roots. Nevertheless, young men who lack experience are also said not to have yet grown a beard. The word thus might well be understood to mean human experience, and the word *correspondenzie*, connections, understood in a human sense. Lisio, on the other hand, is quite clear in his opinion that both *barbe* and *correspondenzie* refer to vegetable matter. The question cannot be decided by the meaning of the word *tempo*, which means “time” as well as “weather.” There would be, therefore, no more evidence to support the conten-

verse circumstances<sup>109</sup> extinguish them; if yet those who, as is said, have become princes so rapidly are not equal to that which fortune placed in their lap, let them know right away to prepare themselves to preserve it and let them afterward make those foundations that the others had made before they became princes.

To both of these aforementioned ways, about becoming a prince by virtue or fortune, I want to attach two examples which have been<sup>110</sup> in the days of our memory: and these are Francesco Sforza and Cesare Borgia. Francesco, by the appropriate means<sup>111</sup> and with great virtue, became duke of Milan from private station, and he kept with little effort that which he had acquired with a thousand gasps.<sup>112</sup> On the other hand, Cesare Borgia, called Duke Valentino by the people, acquired the state with the fortune of the father, and with that he lost it; even though for him every device was used<sup>113</sup> and all those things were done<sup>114</sup> which should have been done by a prudent and virtuous man to sink his roots<sup>115</sup> into states that the arms and the fortune of others had conceded to him. Because, as was said above, whoever does not make the foundations first might make them later with great virtue, though doing so then entails discomfort to the architect and danger to the edifice. If then one will consider all the duke's proceedings, one will see how he made for himself great foundation for future power: which I do not

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tion that Machiavelli was thinking of human affairs than of vegetable matter except for the final word in the phrase, "extinguish," a common euphemism for killing, which simply is inapplicable to uprooted plants.

109. *Tempo* means either time (i.e., human circumstance) or weather.

110. In this awkward, contrived expression, *esempli stati* can mean, literally, exemplary states. Hence, the sentence means not just that these two examples have existed in recent times, but that the tyrants Sforza and Borgia were exemplary. Later in the paragraph it becomes clear that Borgia is the paragon of Machiavellian virtue.

111. *Debiti* means literally "debts." The means would then be the ones owed to the situation. The word is also related to *dovuti*, which gives the same meaning, i.e., "appropriate." The means themselves were a combination of deceit and violence, as Machiavelli tells us in *The Prince*, Chap. XIV, *The History of Florence*, Bk. VI, and *The Art of War*, Bk. I.

112. I.e., with a lot of hard breathing.

113. *Si usassi*, impersonal form, subjunctive mood. It is therefore not clear whether the foregoing *per* means "for" or "by."

114. Subjunctive once again, "all those things" are done *per* a prudent and virtuous man.

115. *barbe*, here meaning unequivocally "roots."

judge it superfluous to discuss, because I would not know better precepts to give to a new prince than the example of his actions: and if his orders<sup>116</sup> did not profit him, it was not his fault, because it originated from an extraordinary and extreme malignity of fortune.

Many difficulties present and future stood in the way of Alexander the Sixth's desire to make great his son the duke. First, he did not see a way to make him lord of any state that was not a state of the Church, and he knew that the duke of Milan and the Venetians would not allow him to take from that<sup>117</sup> of the Church because Faenza and Rimini were already under the protection of the Venetians. Beyond this he saw that the armies of Italy, and especially those of which he could have made use, were in the hands of those who had to fear the greatness of the pope; and therefore he could not trust them, being all with the Orsini and Colonnese<sup>118</sup> and their accomplices. It was therefore necessary that those orders be disturbed, and [it was necessary] to disorder their<sup>119</sup> states, in order to be able securely to take power for oneself over part of them. Which turned out to be easy for him because he found the Venetians who, moved by other causes, had turned to making the French pass into Italy again: which he<sup>120</sup> not only did not interdict but rather facilitated with the dissolution of King Louis' old marriage. The king therefore passed into Italy with the help of the Venetians and the consent of Alexander; nor was he in Milan before the pope had people<sup>121</sup> from him for the enterprise in Romagna; which<sup>122</sup> was consented to him because of the reputation of the king. Therefore, the duke, having acquired Romagna and beaten the Colonnese, wanted to keep the former and to proceed further. Two things impeded him: one was his armies, which did not seem trustworthy to him, and the other the will of France; that is, that the Orsini armies, whose worth he had gauged, might go out from under him and not only might impede his acquiring but might take from him what had been acquired, and that the king might yet do the same. Of the Orsini he had a token when, after the taking of Faenza, he attacked Bo-

116. I.e., the means he employed.

117. That state, including Faenza and Rimini.

118. Two noble families that contended for power in the city of Rome and over the papal states.

119. The states belonging to the Orsini and Colonnese families.

120. Pope Alexander.

121. I.e., armies.

122. Romagna. That is, because people realized that the king of France was backing the pope, Romagna's resistance to the pope collapsed.

logna, because he saw them go cold in that attack; and about the king he came to know his spirit<sup>123</sup> when, having taken the duchy of Urbino, he attacked Tuscany: from which enterprise he was made to desist by the king. Because of this the duke decided not to depend any more on the arms and fortunes of others. And, first thing, he weakened the Orsini and Colonnese parties in Rome; because he earned to himself all their adherents, clansmen<sup>124</sup> though they might have been, making them his clansmen and giving them stipends; and he honored them, according to their qualities, with captaincies and government posts: so that in a few months the affection of the parties extinguished itself and wholly turned upon the duke. After this, he waited for the occasion to extinguish the Orsini, having dispersed those of the Colonna house; which<sup>125</sup> came well to him, and he used it better; because the Orsini, having recognized late that the greatness of the duke and of the Church was their ruin, made a conclave at the Magione,<sup>126</sup> in the Perugia region. From the latter sprang the rebellion of Urbino and the tumults of Romagna and infinite dangers to the duke, all of which he overcame with the help of the French. And, his reputation having returned to him, neither trusting France nor other external sources, he turned to ruses in order not to be compelled to a showdown with them. And he knew so well how to dissimulate his spirit that the Orsini reconciled themselves to him through Lord Paulo, whom the duke did not fail in every kind of act to reassure, giving him monies, clothes, and horses; so that their simplicity led them to Sinigallia into his hands.<sup>127</sup> Then, having extinguished these chiefs and having reduced their partisans to being his friends, having all of Romagna with the duchy of Urbino, the duke had laid good enough foundations for his power, it seeming to him that he had acquired Romagna as a friend and had earned for himself all those peoples, enough to have begun to taste their well-being.<sup>128</sup>

And because this part is worth being known and imitated by others, I do

123. Machiavelli means "intention." But he uses the word *animo* (spirit), which is close to *anima* (soul), in bitter mockery of a churchman who claimed to be searching the souls of men.

124. *Gentili* (adjective) means of the same *gens*, that is, men having blood ties.

125. Occasion.

126. A village near Perugia, on 9 October 1502.

127. Vitellozzo Vitelli and Oliverotto de Fermo, along with many others, were killed at the meeting in Sinigallia on 31 December 1502, when Borgia's soldiers cut them down after dinner. In January 1503, Paolo Orsini fell into a similar trap at Castel della Pieve.

128. I.e., tasting the material benefits and the power of his conquests.

not want to leave it behind. Having taken Romagna and finding it commanded by impotent lords who would sooner despoil their subjects than govern them, and [who had] given them occasion for disunity, not for unity, so that the whole province was full of thefts, feuds, and every other kind of insolence, he judged it necessary, in order to render it peaceful and obedient to the sovereign arm, to give it good government. Therefore, he put at its head<sup>129</sup> Remirro de Orco, cruel and expeditious man; to him he gave the fullest power. This one in little time rendered it peaceful and united, with the greatest reputation. Thereafter the duke judged such excessive authority not to be necessary, because he feared it might become hateful; and he proposed there<sup>130</sup> a civil judiciary<sup>131</sup> in the middle of the province, with a most excellent president, where each city had its own advocate. And because he knew the past rigors had generated some hate, in order to purge the spirits of those peoples and to wholly gain them to himself, he wanted to show that if any cruelty had ensued, it had sprung not from him but from the brusque nature of the minister. And having taken this for his opportunity, he had him placed in the square in Cesena, one morning, in two pieces with a piece of wood and a bloody knife beside him. The ferocity of which spectacle left those peoples at once satisfied and stupefied.

But let us return whence we departed. I say that, the duke finding himself powerful enough and in part secured against present dangers, because he had armed himself in his way and had by and large extinguished those armies which, nearby, could have harmed him, there remained to him fear<sup>132</sup> of the king of France; because he wanted to proceed with acquisition and knew he would not be suffered by the king, who of late had become aware of his error. And because of this he began to seek new friendships, and to vacillate with France in the expedition which the French made to the Kingdom of Naples, against the Spanish who were besieging Gaeta. And his intention<sup>133</sup> was to make sure of them: which soon would have succeeded for him if Alexander had lived.

And these were his dispositions regarding present things. But as far as

129. *Vi prepose*, "he pre-posed there," i.e., he put forth or placed at the head of the government.

130. *Propose vi*, "proposed there," a neat linguistic reversal on his installation of de Orco. Having imposed brutally, Borgia could now be sure that his evil magistrates would be accepted and obeyed.

131. I.e., an assembly of the leading citizenry.

132. *Rispetto*, respect.

133. *Animo*, "spirit," here means that his mind was quickened by the intention.

the future ones, he had in the first instance to ponder lest a new successor to the Church not be his friend and try to take from him what Alexander had given him; and he thought to do it<sup>134</sup> in four ways: first, to take that opportunity from the pope, by extinguishing all the bloodlines of those lords whom he had despoiled; second, to earn for himself all the gentile men of Rome, as is said,<sup>135</sup> in order to be able to keep the pope in check with them; third, to make the College of Cardinals as much his as he could; fourth, to acquire so much power before the pope died that he might resist a first attack by himself alone. Of these four things, at the death of Alexander, he had made three happen, the fourth he considered almost done: because of the despoiled lords he killed as many as he could reach, and very few saved themselves; the gentile Romans he had earned for himself, and he had a very great party in the college;<sup>136</sup> and as for a new acquisition, he had schemed to become lord of Tuscany, and already possessed Perugia and Piombino, and had taken up Pisa's protectorate. And because he did not have to have respect for France (which he did not have to have any longer, since the French had already been despoiled of the kingdom<sup>137</sup> by the Spaniard, so that each of them was constrained by necessity to buy his friendship), he was jumping on Pisa. After this, Lucca and Siena gave up right away, in part out of envy of the Florentines, in part out of fear; the Florentines had no remedy; [so that] if he had succeeded (which would have happened the same year Alexander died), he would have acquired for himself so many forces and so much reputation that he could have held himself up and would no longer have depended on the forces and fortunes of others, but on his own power and virtue. But Alexander died five years after he had begun to draw the sword. He left him with only the state of Romagna solidified, with all the others up in the air, in between two most powerful armies, and sick to death. And there was so much ferocity and so much virtue in the duke, and so well did he know how men are to be gained or to be lost, and so valid were the foundations which in so little time he had made for himself, that, if he had not had those armies on him, or if he had

134. That is, the result of his pondering was a decision to secure himself against the new pope's possible unfriendliness by doing four things.

135. The "as is said" tends to confirm that he is using the word *gentili* in its primordial connotation of "clan." See Chap. VII above. It also refers to the combination of fraud and murder by which Borgia had mastered the Orsini and Colonnese.

136. The College of Cardinals, which elects a new pope after the previous pope's death.

137. The Kingdom of Naples.



been well, he would have withstood every difficulty. And one saw that his foundations were good; because Romagna waited for him more than a month; in Rome, though half-alive, he remained secure, and even though Ballioni, Vitelli, and Orsini came to Rome, they had no following against him; he was able, if not to make pope whomever he wanted, at least to block whomever he did not want. Had he been healthy at Alexander's death, everything would have been easy for him. And he told me in the days in which Julius II was created<sup>138</sup> that he had thought about<sup>139</sup> what might happen as a result of his father's death, and he found a remedy for everything, except that he never thought of his<sup>140</sup> death, that he himself also was about to die.

Therefore I, having drawn together all the duke's actions, would not know to gainsay him; on the contrary, it seems [proper] to me to set him forth<sup>141</sup> as I have done as imitable by all who have risen to power by fortune or by the arms of others. Because he, having great spirit and high intentions, could not have behaved otherwise; and only the brevity of Alexander's life and his illness opposed themselves to his schemes. Whoever therefore judges it necessary in his new principality to secure himself against enemies, to earn friends, to vanquish by force or fraud, to make himself loved and feared by peoples, to be followed and revered by soldiers, to extinguish those who can or must harm you,<sup>142</sup> to innovate the ancient orders with new modes, to be severe and gracious, magnanimous and liberal, to extinguish the unfaithful militia, create a new one, keep friendships of kings and princes, so that they might have either to benefit you with grace or to harm you with respect, cannot find fresher examples than his actions. One can only accuse him in the creation of Julius as pontiff, in which he elected badly; because, as is said, not being able to make the pope he wanted, he could always obtain<sup>143</sup> that anyone not be pope; and he never should have consented to the papacy of those cardinals whom he had harmed, or who,<sup>144</sup>

138. The word *creato*, created, in this context is as inappropriate and mocking in Italian as it is in English.

139. I.e., he had provided for.

140. "His" may refer to his father's death or to his own. It is grammatically — and, therefore, otherwise — ambiguous.

141. *Preporlo*, rare, and easily interchangeable with the common *proporlo*, "propose him." Machiavelli used the same word to indicate Cesare's installation of de Orco.

142. Familiar singular.

143. *Tenere* is probably a contraction of *ottenere*, "obtain."

144. "*O che, diventati papi, avessino ad avere.*" *Che* could be a contraction of



having become popes, would have to fear him. Because men do harm either for fear or for hate. Those whom he had harmed were, among others, San Pietro ad Vincula, Colonna, San Giorgio, Ascanio. All the others, having become popes, had to fear him, except Rouen and the Spaniards, the latter because of affinity and obligation, the former because of power, having joined himself to the kingdom of France. Therefore, before all things, the duke should have created a Spaniard pope, and, not being able to do that, should have consented that it be Rouen and not San Pietro ad Vincula. And whoever believes that in great personages new benefits might make old injuries forgotten, deceives himself. Therefore, the duke erred in his choice, and it was the cause of his final ruin.

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*perché*, in which case the phrase should be translated “or because [he thought], having become popes, they might have to have.” But this would conflict with the advice contained in the rest of the paragraph.

## VIII

*De his qui per scelera ad  
principatum pervenere*  
(Of those who have come to  
princedom by iniquity)

But because one becomes a prince from private status in two other ways, which cannot wholly be attributed either to fortune or to virtue, it is unseemly to me<sup>145</sup> to leave them out, even though one of these may be more widely discussed where republics are treated.<sup>146</sup> These are when one rises to principality through some iniquitous and nefarious means, or when a private citizen becomes prince of his fatherland with the favor of fellow citizens. And, speaking of the first way, it will be shown with two examples, one ancient, the other modern, without otherwise entering into the merits of this part<sup>147</sup> why I judge it sufficient that whoever might be in need, imitate them.

Agathocles the Sicilian became king of Syracuse from a fortune [that was not only] private but lowly and abject. Born of a potter, this one always had an iniquitous life throughout his years: nonetheless, he accomplished his iniquities with such virtue of spirit and of body that, having joined the militia, he rose through its ranks to become *praetor*<sup>148</sup> of Syracuse. Being established in which rank, and having decided<sup>149</sup> to become prince and to keep with violence and without obligation to others what had been conceded him by agreement, and having an understanding concerning this design of his with Hamilcar the Carthaginian, who was operating with his

145. *non mi pare*, "it does not seem to me." This very common incomplete expression begs the question "why not?" The sense of the sentence, however, is that it is not seemly.

146. Namely, in Machiavelli's *Discourses*.

147. That is, Machiavelli claims to stay at arm's length from the question of whether this sort of thing is good. As we shall see, he is intimately involved.

148. Military commander.

149. *Deliberato*, "deliberated."

armies in Sicily, one morning he convened the people and the senate of Syracuse, as if he had had to deliberate<sup>150</sup> things pertinent to the republic; and at a preordained nod he had all the senators and the richest of the people killed by his soldiers. Once they were killed, he occupied and held the principality of that city without any civil controversy. And although he was twice routed<sup>151</sup> and finally besieged by the Carthaginians, he not only was able to defend his city but, having left part of his people to the defense of the siege, he attacked Africa with the others, and in a brief time freed Syracuse from the siege and militarily brought the Carthaginians to extreme necessity: and they were constrained to reconcile themselves with him, being content with the possession of Africa, and to leave Sicily to Agathocles. Therefore, whoever might consider this man's actions and virtues will see no things, or few, which he might attribute to fortune; thus, as is said above, he came to principality not through anyone's favor but through the ranks of the militia, which he had earned with a thousand discomforts and dangers, and thereafter he kept it with many animated and dangerous partisan struggles. One cannot yet call it virtue to kill one's own citizens, to betray friends, to be without faith, without pity, without religion, by which modes one can acquire empire, but not glory. Because, if one were to consider Agathocles' virtue in entering into and exiting from dangers, and the greatness of his spirit in bearing and overcoming adverse things, one does not see why he might have to be judged inferior to any most excellent captain. Nonetheless, his ferocious cruelty and inhumanity, with infinite iniquities, do not consent that he be celebrated among the most excellent men. One cannot therefore attribute to fortune or virtue what he achieved without one or the other.

In our times, Alexander VI reigning, Oliverotto da Fermo, having been orphaned<sup>152</sup> many years before, was raised by a maternal uncle named Giovanni Fogliani, and in his earliest youth given to military service under Paolo Vitelli, so that, filled with that discipline, he might attain to some excellent military rank. Thereafter, Paolo dead, he served under his brother,

150. *Deliberare*. But he had already deliberately planned a slaughter. Note the ironic double meaning.

151. That is, defeated in battle.

152. The word Machiavelli uses here for orphan is *piccolo*, "small." This is a rare usage of the word indeed, but it points to Oliverotto's small stature and to what finally was his insufficiency. Agathocles was "big" with regard to the things in which Oliverotto was "small."

Vitellozzo, and in the briefest time, being astute and bold in person and in spirit, he became the first man in his militia. But, it seeming to him a servile thing to stay with others, he thought,<sup>153</sup> with the help of some citizens of Fermo, to whom serfdom was dearer than the liberty of their fatherland, and with Vitellozzo's indulgence, to occupy Fermo. And he wrote to Giovanni Fogliani how, having been away from home for many years, he wanted to come see him and his city, and in some way to come to know his patrimony again: and because he had labored for nothing else than to gain honor, he wanted to come in honor and accompanied by a hundred horsemen of his friends and servants, so that his citizens might see how he had not spent time in vain: and he begged that Giovanni might be pleased to order that he might be received honorably by the Fermians: which would honor not only himself but also Giovanni, he being his pupil. Therefore, Giovanni did not fail any act due to the nephew; and, having had him received honorfully by the Fermians, he<sup>154</sup> lodged himself in his houses: where, having passed some days and waited to order what was necessary to his future iniquity, he made a most solemn banquet, where he invited Giovanni Fogliani and all the first men of Fermo. And once the foods were consumed and all the other entertainments which are customary in similar banquets, Oliverotto artfully moved certain grave arguments, speaking of the greatness of Pope Alexander and of his son Cesare, and of their enterprises. Giovanni and the others answering which arguments, he at once rose up, saying that these things [were] to be spoken of in a more secret place; and he retired to a chamber, whereinto Giovanni and all the other citizens followed. Neither had they seated themselves before soldiers came out from its secret places who killed Giovanni and all the others. After which homicide, Oliverotto mounted horse and ran the land, and besieged the supreme magistrate in the palace; so much that out of fear they were constrained to obey him and to establish<sup>155</sup> a government, of which he made himself the prince. And all those being dead who could have harmed him, because they were unhappy with him, he fortified<sup>156</sup> himself with the new civil and military orders; so that, in the space of the year in which he held the principality, he not only

153. Note the parallel usage of *deliberare*. Oliverotto tried to think like Agathocles, but he was not in the same league. Cesare Borgia, however, was.

154. Now referring to Oliverotto, not to the uncle.

155. The word is *fermare*, which literally means "to stop." This unusual usage is a pun on the name of the city, Fermo.

156. *si corroboró*, i.e., fortified himself.

was secure in the city of Fermo but had become fearsome to all his neighbors. And his expunging would have been difficult, as was Agathocles', had he not let himself be duped by Cesare Borgia, when, as was said above, he took the Orsini and Vitelli in Sinigallia; where, one year after he had committed the parricide, he, together with Vitellozzo, who had been his teacher in his virtues and iniquities, was taken and strangled.

Someone could doubt whence it might spring that Agathocles and some similar was able to live long and secure in his fatherland after infinite betrayals and cruelty, and to defend himself from external enemies, and was never conspired against by his citizens: while<sup>157</sup> many others have not been able to maintain the state<sup>158</sup> through cruelty even in peaceful times, not to speak of the doubtful times of war. I believe that this might ensue from cruelties badly used or well used.<sup>159</sup> Well used one can call those<sup>160</sup> (if it is licit to say *bene*<sup>161</sup> of evil) which one does in one stroke, out of the necessity of assuring oneself, and thereafter are not persisted in, but are converted into as great usefulness as possible for the subjects. Badly used are those which, though yet in the beginning they be few, rather increase with time than flicker out. Those who observe the first mode can have some remedy for their state with God and with men; as Agathocles had.<sup>162</sup> Those others, it is impossible that they maintain themselves. Hence it is to be noted that, in taking a state, its occupier must consider all those offenses which it is necessary for him to do, and do them all in one stroke, in order not to have to renew them every day, and not renewing them to reassure men and to earn them to himself by benefiting them. Whoever does otherwise, either out of timidity or because of bad counsel, is always constrained to keep the knife in hand; nor can he ever base himself upon his subjects, these not being able to be sure of him because of the fresh and continuous injuries. Because injuries must be done all together, so that, being tasted less, they offend less: and the benefits must be done little by little so that they might be better

157. *Con cio sia che*, "with thus it be that," i.e., while.

158. *Stato* can mean polity, sociopolitical status, personal, or even marital status.

159. Here Machiavelli uses *bene* and *male*, good and evil, as adverbs to mean "well" and "badly." This is the point where Machiavelli begins the transformation of their meaning — a transformation that is at the very heart of his purpose in *The Prince*.

160. Treasons and cruelties.

161. Good.

162. No one but Machiavelli in this sentence even suggested that Agathocles ever endeared himself to God in any way.

tasted. And a prince must above all live with his subjects so that no accident either, ill or good, might constrain him to change: because, when necessities come through adverse times, you will not be in time with evil,<sup>163</sup> and the good you do does not benefit you, because it is judged to have been forced, and no gratitude at all is reserved you.<sup>164</sup>

163. I.e., you will not have time to maintain yourself by doing harm.

164. Most Italian authorities understand the last phrase as I have translated it. However, there is a minority position of which the reader should be aware. The last phrase contains two words, the meanings of which are uncertain, *grado* and *saputo*. The first is generally believed to be miswritten *grato*, or “gratitude.” But if it is not miswritten, it means “rank.” *Saputo* is likewise held to be used to mean *serbato*, “reserved.” But if the word means “known,” as it literally does, then the last phrase would have to mean “and no rank at all is recognized you.” In either case the thrust of the sentence is the same.

## IX

### *De principatu civili* (Of the civil principality)

But, coming to the other part, when a private citizen becomes prince of his fatherland not by iniquity or other intolerable violence but by the favor of other citizens, which one can call civil principality (neither all virtue nor all fortune is necessary to achieve it, but rather a fortunate cleverness), I say that one ascends to this principality either with the favor of the people or with the favor of the great. Because in every city one finds these two different dispositions,<sup>165</sup> and it springs from this that the people desire not to be commanded nor oppressed by the great, and that the great desire to command and oppress the people: and from these two different appetites one of three effects springs up in the city: either principality or liberty or license.

The principality is caused either by the people or by the great, according to whether one or the other of these parts has the occasion for it; because the great, seeing themselves<sup>166</sup> unable to resist the people, begin to devolve reputation to one among themselves and make him prince, so that they might vent their appetite under his shadow. The people, again, seeing themselves<sup>167</sup> unable to resist the great, devolve reputation to one and make him prince to be defended by his authority. He who comes to the principality with the help of the great maintains himself with greater difficulty than the one who becomes [prince] with the help of the people; because he finds himself prince with many around him who seem his equals, and because of this he can neither command them nor manage them his way. But he who arrives at the principality with popular favor finds himself there alone, and has around either no one or very few who are not ready to obey. Beyond this, one cannot satisfy the great honestly and without injury to others, but one can well [satisfy] the people; because the people's purpose is more honest than that of the great, the latter wanting to oppress and the former not to be oppressed. Furthermore, a prince can never secure himself against a hostile people, they being too many; against the great he can secure himself,

165. *Umori*, i.e., "humors" or "appetites."

166. The reflexive is the translator's.

167. Again, translator's reflexive.



they being few. The worst a prince might expect from a hostile people is to be abandoned by it; but from the great who are enemies, he must fear not only that he might be abandoned but also that they might come against him; because, there being more foresight and cunning in them, they always find occasion to rise up, and they seek rank from those they hope will win. Moreover, while it is always necessary for the prince to live with that same people, he can well do without those great ones, since he can make and unmake some of them every day, by taking away and giving them reputation at his pleasure.

And in order to better clear up this part, I say that one can consider the great principally in two ways. Either they conduct themselves so that by what they do they obligate themselves to your fortune completely, or not: those who do obligate themselves and are not rapacious, one must honor and love; those who do not obligate themselves must be examined in two ways. Either they do this out of pusillanimity and natural defect of the spirit. Then you must make use especially of those that are of good counsel, because in prosperous times they honor you and in adversities you do not have to fear them. But when they do not obligate themselves on purpose and because of ambition, it is a sign that they think more of themselves than of you; and the prince must guard himself against them, and fear them as if they were open enemies, because in adversities they will help ruin him.

Therefore, one who becomes prince through the favor of the people must keep it his friend: which should be easy, since it does not ask other than not to be oppressed. But one who becomes prince against the people with the favor of the great must try to earn the people to himself before anything else: which should be easy, if and when he takes up its protection. And because men, when they have good from him from whom they have expected evil, obligate themselves all the more to their benefactor, the people immediately become better disposed toward him than if he had made his way to the principality by its favors: and the prince can earn it in many ways, [concerning] which, because they vary according to the subject, one cannot give a sure rule, and therefore [they] will be left behind. I will conclude only that it is necessary for a prince to have the people as a friend: otherwise he has no remedy in adversity.

Nabis, prince of the Spartans, sustained the siege of all Greece and of a most victorious Roman army, and defended his fatherland and his state<sup>168</sup> against them, and when the danger came upon him, it sufficed him to secure himself against a few: which would not have sufficed him if he had had the

168. *Stato* here means Nabis's own political status.

people as enemy. And let no one reproach this opinion of mine with that trite proverb, that he who builds upon the people builds upon mud: because that is true when a private citizen makes his foundation on it, and lets himself think<sup>169</sup> that the people might free him when he be oppressed by the enemy or by the magistrates. In this case one could often find himself deceived as were the Gracchi in Rome and Messer Georgio Scali in Firenze. But if a prince were to found himself on it, as a prince able to command, and as a man of heart, not dismayed in adversities, who did not lack other preparations, and who moved the common people<sup>170</sup> with his spirit and orders, never would he find himself deceived by it<sup>171</sup> and he would turn out to have made his foundations well.

These principalities normally incur danger when they are about to rise from civil into absolute order; because these princes command either by themselves or by means of magistrates. In the last case their stance is weaker and more dangerous; because they stand [or fall] wholly by the will of those citizens who are set forth<sup>172</sup> in magistracies, who, especially in adverse times, can take the state from him with great ease, either by going against him or by not obeying him. And during dangers the prince lacks the time to take up absolute authority; because the citizens and subjects, who normally take orders from the magistrates, are not in these circumstances disposed to obeying him; and in doubtful times he will always be destitute of trustworthy people. Because such a prince cannot found himself upon what he sees in quiet times, when the citizens have need of the state, because then each runs, each promises, and each wants to die for him when death is far away; but in adverse times, when the state has need of the citizens, then few such people are to be found. And this experience is all the more dangerous because it can be had but once. And therefore a wise prince must think of a means by which his citizens have need of the state and of him, always and in every kind of time, and then they will be faithful always.

169. Think wrongly, of course. The verb here is *dare da intendere*. Cf. note 6 above.

170. I.e., the whole people.

171. I.e., by the people.

172. *Preposti* — people to whom prominence has been given. The verb here is the same as the one that described Cesare Borgia's appointment of Orco.

# X

## *Quomodo omnium principatum vires perpendi debeant*

(In what way the forces of all  
principalities must be measured)

In examining the qualities of these principalities, it is convenient<sup>173</sup> to have another consideration: that is, if a prince has so much state<sup>174</sup> that he may bear up by himself whenever he needs to, or rather if he always has need of defense by others. And to better clarify this part, I say that I judge able to bear themselves up by themselves those who can put together a proper army and make a day<sup>175</sup> with whomever comes to attack him because of abundance of either men or money, and hence I judge to always have need of others those who cannot show up against the enemy in the field, but are constrained to take refuge within the walls, and to guard them. I have discussed the first case, and in the future we will say of it what is necessary. Upon the second case, one cannot say more than to comfort<sup>176</sup> such princes to fortify and equip their own land<sup>177</sup> and to take no account of the countryside. And whoever will have fortified his own land well, and have handled himself as is said before and one will say below concerning the other measures, always will be attacked with great respect; because men are always against doing enterprises where difficulty may be seen, nor can one see ease in attacking one who has made his land valiant and is not hated by the people.

The cities of Germany are most free, have little countryside, and obey

173. *Conviene* (third per. sing.) implies that "one had better."

174. Here the ambiguity of *stato* is clear. It means both the provisions by which a man keeps his political primacy, and the means by which a polity maintains its political existence against others. *The Prince* talks about the nature of politics at all levels.

175. I.e., fight a set-piece battle.

176. The awkward expression *confortare* is deliberately weaker than "to advise" or "to urge." Princes who are in such straits are to be comforted to do something with little hope that doing it will save their necks.

177. I.e., city.

the emperor when they want to, and fear neither him nor any other powerful one they have around: because they are so fortified that each and every one thinks that expunging them would have to be tedious and difficult. Because all have moats and walls as they should,<sup>178</sup> and have enough artillery: they always keep in public storage enough to drink and to eat and to burn for one year; and beyond this, in order to be able to keep the plebs assuaged,<sup>179</sup> and without loss to the public, they always have in common enough to give them work for a year in those activities that are the nerve and life of the cities, and are the industries of which the plebs eat.<sup>180</sup> They also keep military exercises in order, and have many ordinances to make sure they do. Therefore, a prince, who has a strong city and who does not make himself hated, cannot be attacked and, though he be, whoever attacks him will come away from it with shame; because the things of the world are so changeable that it is impossible to keep armies slothfully besieging him for a year. And whoever might reply: If the people have their possessions outside and see them burn, they will not stand it, and the long siege and the care for one's own will make them forget the prince: I answer that a powerful and spirited prince will always overcome all these difficulties, now giving the subjects hope that the evil not be long, now fear of the enemy's cruelty, now with dexterity making sure of those who appear to him too fiery.

Beyond this, the enemy, reasonably, must<sup>181</sup> burn and ruin the country upon his arrival, while the spirits of men are still hot and willing for defense; and because of this the prince needs fear<sup>182</sup> the less, since by the time a few days have passed and spirits have cooled, the damages have already been done and the hurts<sup>183</sup> received, and there is no more remedy; and then they come together with their prince all the more, it seeming that he has an obligation to them because their houses have been burned, and their possessions ruined, for his defense. And the nature of men is, to oblige oneself because of the benefits one gives, as well as because of those one receives. Therefore, if one will well consider everything, it be not difficult for a prudent prince to keep the spirits of the citizens firm during the beginning of a siege and later, so long as they lack not the means of living or of defending themselves.

178. *Conveniente*, "as is convenient."

179. *Pasciuta*, the state of a sheep after it has grazed.

180. *Pasca*, subjunctive of the verb *pascere*, which refers primarily to animals.

181. Subjunctive, i.e., should be expected to burn and ruin.

182. *Dubitare*, "doubt."

183. *Mali*, "evils."

## XI

### *De principatibus ecclesiasticis* (Of ecclesiastical principalities)

It only remains to us at present to reason of ecclesiastical principalities: all difficulties concerning which come before they are possessed: because, though they are acquired either by virtue or by fortune, they are kept without either because they are upheld by orders grown ancient in religion,<sup>184</sup> which have been so powerful and of such quality that they keep their princes in state regardless of how they proceed and live. Only these have states, and they do not defend them; subjects, and they do not govern them: and the states are not taken from them, though undefended, and the subjects, though not governed, do not concern themselves about it, neither do they think about, nor can they estrange themselves from them. Therefore, only these principalities are secure and happy. But since they are upheld by superior cause, to which the human mind does not reach, I will leave off speaking of them; because, since they are exalted and maintained by God, discussing them would be the doing of a presumptuous and daring<sup>185</sup> man. Nonetheless, if someone were to inquire of me why the Church has come to such greatness in the temporal, so that before Alexander<sup>186</sup> the Italian powers, and not *solum*<sup>187</sup> those who were called powers, but each baron and lord, though small, esteemed it little in the temporal, and now a king of France trembles at him, and the Church has been able to pull him out of Italy, and to ruin the Venetians: it does not seem superfluous to commit the matter to memory<sup>188</sup> in good part, though it be well known. Before Charles, king of France, had passed into Italy,<sup>189</sup> this province was under the power<sup>190</sup> of the

184. *ordini antiquati nella religione*. "Orders" are either "aged" or "grown ancient" or "grown ancient and out of fashion" in religion.

185. *Temerario*, one who acts with temerity. Since Machiavelli proceeds to discuss precisely this subject, the adjectives apply to him.

186. Pope Alexander VI Borgia.

187. Latin *non solum*, not only. Here begins another run of mock solemnities.

188. That is, to learn it by heart.

189. In 1494.

190. *Imperio*, literally, "empire." By the use of the word *empire*, Machiavelli obviously contrasted the power of the pope and other petty emperors with the power of the

pope, the Venetians, the king of Naples, the duke of Milan, and the Florentines. These powers had to have two principal concerns: the one, that a foreigner not enter into Italy with arms; the other, that each of them might occupy more state. Those who concerned them the most were the pope and the Venetians. And the unity of all the others was needed to hold back the Venetians, as it was in the defense of Ferrara; and to keep down the pope they<sup>191</sup> used the barons of Rome, among whom there was always cause for trouble,<sup>192</sup> since they were divided into two factions, Orsini and Colonna, and, standing with arms in hand and eyes upon the pope, they kept the papacy weak and unsteady. And though once in a while a spirited pope, as was Sixtus,<sup>193</sup> might arise, *tamen*<sup>194</sup> neither fortune nor wisdom could ever free him from these discomforts. And the brevity of their life was the cause of it; because, in the ten years a pope lived on average, he could hardly lower one of the factions; and if, for instance, one [pope] had almost extinguished the Colonna, another one hostile to the Orsini would arise, who would make them<sup>195</sup> rise again, and he did not have time<sup>196</sup> to extinguish the Orsini. This made the temporal forces of the pope little esteemed in Italy. Then Alexander VI arose, who, of all the popes who had ever been, showed how much a pope could prevail with money and with forces. And through the instrumentality of Duke Valentino and because of the coming of the French, he did all those things which I said above concerning the actions of the duke. And even though it was not his intention to make the Church great, nonetheless, what the duke did redounded to the greatness of the Church; which after his death, once the duke had died, was the heir of his toils. Then came Pope Julius, who found the Church great, having all of Romagna, and, because of Alexander's threshings, the barons of Rome had been snuffed out and their factions annihilated; moreover, he found the door still open to a way of accumulating money, never<sup>197</sup> used before Alexander, which

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Holy Roman Empire, of which Italy was supposed to be a province. This confusion of the roles of pope and emperor is another small way by which Machiavelli seeks to discredit the premises of medieval politics.

191. Presumably, the powers.

192. *Scandolo*, literally, "scandal." There was plenty of that, too.

193. Sixtus IV.

194. Latin, "nevertheless."

195. The Colonna.

196. *A tempo*, i.e., he could not do it in time.

197. "*Non mai piu usitato da Alessandro indietro.*" This jumbled phrase uses a



things Julius not *solum*<sup>198</sup> continued but increased; he thought to gain Bologna for himself, to extinguish the Venetians, and to chase the French from Italy; and all these enterprises succeeded for him, and with so much more credit for himself, insomuch as he did everything to increase the Church and not any private man. He also kept the Orsini and the Colonnese parties within the limits in which he found them; and, even though some chiefs among them might have been able to make trouble, *tamen*<sup>199</sup> two things stopped them: one, the greatness of the Church, which dismayed them; the other, not having their own cardinals, who are the origins of tumults among them. Nor will these parties ever remain quiet so long as they have cardinals; because having them nourishes parties, within Rome and outside it, and those barons are forced to defend them: and thus the discord and tumults among barons springs from the ambitions of prelates. Therefore, the holiness of Pope Leo<sup>200</sup> found the papacy most powerful: which is why one hopes that if the others made it great with arms, this one will make it most great and venerable with his goodness and his infinite other virtues.<sup>201</sup>

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future-oriented term to refer to the past. *Mai piu* means “never more,” connoting that the deed had not been done previously. But *non mai piu usitato* can also mean “never been used.” Since the subject is the Church’s self-enrichment through the sale of indulgences, a subject that five years after the writing of *The Prince*, in 1517, fueled the Protestant Reformation, Machiavelli is beating a wide, fuzzy circle around the hottest of bushes. And then he moves on quickly.

198. Latin *non solum*, “not only.” The reference is solemnly broadened to the kinds of things done by Cesare Borgia.

199. Latin, “nevertheless.”

200. Leo X Medici, son of Lorenzo. Machiavelli does not say His Holiness, pointedly referring not so much to Leo as to Leo’s titular holiness, as he had referred to his father’s titular majesty.

201. Cf. Machiavelli’s reference in Chap. XVII to the “infinite virtues” and to the “*other* virtues” (emphasis added) of Hannibal. The only one of Hannibal’s qualities he mentions is “inhuman cruelty.” Machiavelli has no illusions about the Medicis.

## XII

### *Quot sint genera militiae et de mercenariis militibus*

(How many are the kinds of militia, and  
of mercenary soldiers)

Having discussed in particular all the qualities of the principalities which I proposed to discuss at the beginning, and in some part <sup>202</sup> considered the causes of their being good and evil,<sup>203</sup> and shown the ways<sup>204</sup> by which many have tried to acquire them and keep them, it now remains to me generally to discuss the offenses and defenses that can occur in each of the aforementioned. We have said above that it is necessary to a prince to have good foundations for himself; otherwise he necessarily comes to ruin.<sup>205</sup> And the principal foundations that all states have,<sup>206</sup> new ones like old or mixed ones, are good laws and good arms. And because there cannot be good laws where there are not good arms, and where there are good arms there must be good laws, I will leave aside reasoning of laws and will speak of arms.

I say, therefore, that the arms with which a prince defends his state either are his own or they are mercenary, either auxiliary or mixed. The mercenary and auxiliary are useless and dangerous; and if one holds his state on the basis of mercenary arms, he will never be firm or secure; because they are disunited, ambitious, without discipline, unfaithful; gallant among friends, vile among enemies; no fear of God, no faith with men; and one defers ruin insofar as one defers the attack; and in peace you are despoiled by them, in

202. *Qualche parte* also means "somewhere."

203. "*Del bene e del male esseri loro*," "of their well-being and of their being sick." Machiavelli quietly introduces the confusion between good and political effectiveness on one hand, and evil and political ineffectiveness on the other. This will shortly become the very center of the book.

204. *Modi*, "modes."

205. *Convieni*. If he does not have good foundations, he will come to ruin *necessarily*.

206. Subjunctive, i.e., the foundations that states *may* have. Machiavelli is stating his definite view as if it were tentative.

war by the enemy. The cause of this is that they have no other love nor other cause to keep them in camp but a little pay, which is not sufficient to make them want to die for you. They want to be your soldiers while you do not make war; but when war comes they want either to flee or to go away. I should take little toil to persuade on this point, because nowadays the ruin of Italy is caused by nothing else than by having reposed<sup>207</sup> upon mercenary arms for many years. These arms had gained some advantages for some, and appeared gallant among themselves; but when the foreigner came, they showed what they were. Hence, Charles, king of France, was allowed<sup>208</sup> to take Italy with chalk; and he who said that our sins were the cause of it,<sup>209</sup> said the truth; but it was not quite the ones which he believed, but those of which I have spoken: and because these were sins of princes, even they suffered the penalty.

I want better to demonstrate the nefariousness of these arms. The mercenary captains are either excellent men or not: if they are, you cannot trust them, because they will always aspire to their own greatness, either by oppressing you who are their boss, or by oppressing others outside of your intention; but if he is not virtuous, he ruins you by the ordinary.<sup>210</sup> And if one answers that whoever has arms in his hand will do this, whether mercenary or not, I would reply that arms are used by either a prince or a republic. The prince must go in person and himself do the office of captain; the republic has to send its citizens: and when they send a man who does not turn out to be worthy, it must change him; and when he does succeed, to bind him with laws so that he might not overstep the mark. And by experience one sees that only princes and armed republics make very great progress, and that mercenary arms never do anything but damage. And a republic armed with its own army comes to the obedience<sup>211</sup> of one of its own citizens with greater difficulty than one armed with foreign arms.

Rome and Sparta were armed and free for many centuries. The Swiss are

207. *Riposatati*. The meaning is that Italy had counted on mercenary armies to the point that these armies had become the foundation on which Italian politics rested. But the word *riposatati* conveys the image of a country that had laid down for a lazy rest, and implies that these armies were the bed on which the country rested.

208. *lui licito*, "it was licit [to King Charles]." Chalk was used to mark the houses to be used as lodging for the King's soldiers.

209. Girolamo Savonarola, in a sermon in November 1494.

210. That is, by ordinary, routine incompetence.

211. That is, a republic that has its own army succumbs to a homegrown dictator more rarely than one that hires mercenaries.

most armed and most free. Among ancient mercenary armies *in exemplis*<sup>212</sup> are the Carthaginians; who were about to be<sup>213</sup> oppressed by their own mercenaries after the first war with the Romans, even though the Carthaginians had their own citizens as chiefs. Philip of Macedon, after the death of Epaminondas, was made captain of their people;<sup>214</sup> and after their victory took their liberty from them. The Milanese, Duke Filippo having died, hired<sup>215</sup> Francesco Sforza against the Venetians; who, having overcome the enemies at Caravaggio, joined with them to oppress his Milanese employers. Sforza the father, having been hired<sup>216</sup> by Queen Giovanna of Naples, left her disarmed all of a sudden, because of which she was constrained to throw herself into the lap of the king of Aragon in order not to lose her kingdom. And if the Venetians and the Florentines have somehow increased their empire with these armies, and their captains did not make themselves princes through them but defended them, I answer that the Florentines in this case were favored by chance; because among the virtuous captains, whom they could have feared, some did not win, some found opposition, others turned their ambition elsewhere. The one who did not win was Giovanni Aucut,<sup>217</sup> whose faith one could not know because he had not won; but everyone will confess that if they had won, the Florentines would have been at his discretion. Sforza always had the Bracceschi against him, so that each guarded the other: Francesco turned his attention to Lombardy; Braccio against the Church and the Kingdom of Naples. But let us come to what happened a short time ago. The Florentines made Paolo Vitelli their captain, a most prudent man, who from private status had taken on a very great reputation. If this one had taken Pisa, no one could deny that it would have been necessary<sup>218</sup> for the Florentines to stay with him; because if he had become their enemies' soldier,<sup>219</sup> they had no remedy; and if they had kept him, they would have had to obey him.

If one will consider the progresses of the Venetians, one will see that they operated securely and gloriously while they made war themselves:

212. Latin, "for example."

213. *Furono per essere*, "were to be," i.e., in the First Punic War, 241–237 B.C.

214. 346 B.C.

215. *Soldarono* (third pers. pl. of the verb *soldare*), meaning "engaged for *soldi*," i.e., money. Filippo Visconti died in 1448.

216. *Soldato*, the noun *soldier*, is also the past participle of the verb *soldare*.

217. Sir John Hawkwood.

218. *Conveniva*, "it would have been convenient," and therefore necessary.

219. *Soldato*, i.e., hireling.

which was before they turned to enterprises on land: where they operated most virtuously with their own gentlemen and with the armed plebs; but as they began to fight on land, they left that virtue and followed the customs of Italy. And at the beginning of their expansion on land they did not have to fear much from their captains, not having been there much and being of great reputation; but as they became bigger, which was under Carmignola, they had a taste of this mistake. Because, having seen him most virtuous, having beaten the duke of Milan under his government, and knowing on the other hand how he cooled toward<sup>220</sup> war, they judged that they could no longer win with him, because he did not want to, nor could they fire him lest they lose again what they had conquered; which is why they were constrained by necessity to kill him in order to make sure of him. Thereafter they had as their captains Bartolommeo da Bergamo, Roberto da San Severino, the count of Pitigliano, and similar ones; with whom they had to fear their losses, not their gains: as occurred then at Vailá, where in one day they lost that which they had acquired in eight hundred years with such toil. Because these arms generate only slow, late, and weak acquisitions, and sudden and miraculous losses. And because I have come with these examples<sup>221</sup> in Italy, which has been governed for many years by mercenary arms, I want to discuss them more from the top,<sup>222</sup> so that, having seen their origin and progression, one might better correct them.

You have to perceive<sup>223</sup> that, as soon as in these latter times the empire began to be thrown back from Italy and the pope took greater reputation in its temporal affairs, Italy divided itself into several states; because many of the big cities took up arms against their nobles, who earlier had oppressed them with the emperor's support, and the Church [took up arms against] the cities<sup>224</sup> in order to give itself temporal reputation; in many others their own citizens became princes. Hence it is that, Italy having come almost into the hands of the Church and of some republics, and those priests and those other citizens not being used to practicing arms, they began to hire for-

220. Francesco da Carmignola led Venice to victory at Maclodio in 1427 but lost his ardor for the war.

221. I.e., "because I have written of these Italian examples."

222. I.e., "from the beginning," but also "from on high," that is, "I want to treat the whole matter systematically."

223. Plural you, followed by the verb *intendere*. The sense is that of the colloquial English expression, "You've got to get this into your head."

224. I.e., the Church took up arms against the cities. But Machiavelli chooses not to say it clearly.

eigners. The first who gave reputation to this militia<sup>225</sup> was Alberigo da Conio of Romagna. From his model<sup>226</sup> descended, among others, Braccio and Sforza, who were the arbiters of Italy in their time. After these came all the others who have governed these armies until our times. And the consequence of their virtue has been that Italy has been run over by Charles, preyed upon by Louis, raped by Fernando,<sup>227</sup> and vilified by the Swiss. The order<sup>228</sup> to which they have adhered has been, first, to give reputation to themselves, to take reputation away from the infantries.<sup>229</sup> They did this because, being without a state and in business, having few infantrymen would not give them reputations and many they could not feed; and therefore they limited themselves to cavalry, where with a supportable number they were fed and honored. And in the end things came to the point that in an army of twenty thousand soldiers two thousand infantrymen were not to be found. Beyond this, they had used every effort<sup>230</sup> to take away from themselves and from the soldiers the toil and the fear, not killing each other in fights, but taking one another prisoner and without ransom. They did not run to attack the cities at night; while those in the cities did not run to attack the tents; they did not make either a palisade or moat around the camp; they did not campaign in winter. And all these things were permitted in their military orders, and invented by them in order to avoid, as is said, both toil and dangers: so much that they have led<sup>231</sup> Italy to be slave and vilified.

225. I.e., to this way of doing things military.

226. *Disciplina*, "discipline."

227. Ferdinand the Catholic, king of Spain.

228. I.e., the priorities.

229. The infantries are the forces raised among the local citizens.

230. *Industria*. The same word was used in the previous sentence, where it was translated as "business."

231. *Condotta*, as in *condottiere*, mercenary captain. I.e., the mercenary leaders and captains have led and captained Italy into slavery.



### XIII

## *De militibus auxiliaris, mixtis et propriis* (Of auxiliary soldiery, mixed and one's own)

Auxiliary arms, which are the other useless arms, are when a powerful one is called to come help and defend you with his arms: as in recent times Pope Julius, having seen the sad proof of his mercenary armies in the Ferrara enterprise, turned to auxiliaries; and contracted<sup>232</sup> with Ferdinand, king of Spain, to help him with his people and armies. These armies can be useful and good for themselves, but they are almost always harmful to him who calls on them; because, losing, you remain undone; winning, you remain their prisoner. *Et*<sup>233</sup> though the ancient histories be full of these examples, nonetheless I do not want to leave out this fresh example of Pope Julius II; whose decision<sup>234</sup> to stick himself wholly into the hands of a foreigner because he wanted Ferrara could not have been less thought out. But his good fortune spawned a third thing, so that he did not reap the fruit of his bad choice:<sup>235</sup> because, after his auxiliaries had broken at Ravenna, the Swiss rose up and chased out the victors, outside of any expectation of his own and of others. He did not remain a prisoner of the enemy, because they had fled, nor of his auxiliaries, since he had won with arms other than theirs. The Florentines, being wholly disarmed, led<sup>236</sup> ten thousand Frenchmen to Pisa to take it: because of which decision they incurred more danger than at any time in their travails. The emperor of Constantinople, to oppose his

232. *Convenne*, from the verb *convenire*, “to convene,” “to make a *convenzione*” (convention or contract). Given Machiavelli’s frequent equation of *convenire* with both convenience and necessity, he characterizes the pope’s deal with the king of Spain as a convenient deal.

233. Latin, “and.” Again, solemnity.

234. *Partito del quale*, “whose chosen part.”

235. *Elezione*, “election.” Popes, of course, have elections in two senses: they are elected, and they elect. Julius chose badly and, Machiavelli hints broadly, was badly chosen.

236. *Conclussone*, i.e., they engaged or hired. This awkward expression is probably a pun on *condussone*, “they led [a certain number] of them.”

neighbors, put ten thousand Turks into Greece; who did not want to leave after the war ended: which was the beginning of Greece's servitude to the infidels.

Therefore, whoever wants to be unable to win, let him avail himself of such armies, because they are much more dangerous than the mercenary ones: because with these ruin is accomplished; they are all united, all committed to obeying others: but the mercenary ones, once they have won, need more time and greater occasion to hurt you, since they are not all of one body, and, having been found and paid by you, and in which one-third may be commanded by you, cannot swiftly take up so much authority as to hurt you. In sum, in mercenary ones, indolence is more dangerous, while in the auxiliaries, virtue is.

Therefore, a wise prince has always fled these arms and turned to his own; and has sooner wanted to lose with his than to win with others', judging a victory that is acquired with alien arms not a true one. I will never fear<sup>237</sup> to cite Cesare Borgia and his actions. The duke entered Romagna with auxiliary arms, leading wholly French troops, and with these he took Imola and Forlì. But, such arms not seeming secure to him, he turned to the mercenary ones, judging that there be less danger in them, and engaged both the Orsini and the Vitelli. Later, managing and finding them doubtful, unfaithful, and dangerous, he extinguished them and turned to his own. And one can easily see the difference between these arms, considering the difference between the duke's reputation, when he had only the French and when he had Orsini and Vitelli, and when he was left with his own soldiers and on his own: and always one will find it increased; never was he so esteemed as when everyone saw that he was the total owner of his arms.

I did not want to depart from examples both Italian and fresh: *tamen*<sup>238</sup> I do not want to leave out Hiero of Syracuse, since he was among those previously mentioned by me. This one, as I said, having been made chief of the armies of the Syracusans, right away recognized that mercenary militia are not useful, because the *condottieri* are made like our Italians;<sup>239</sup> and, it seeming to him that he was unable to keep them or to let them go, he had them all cut to pieces: and thereafter made war with his own arms and not with alien ones. I yet want to commit to memory one scene from the Old

237. Literally, "I will never doubt to allege."

238. Latin, "nevertheless."

239. I.e., all *condottieri* anywhere, anytime, are made of the same stuff as the Italian *condottieri* of Machiavelli's time. In the subsequent sentences, note Machiavelli's constant pairing of bloody tyrants with men whom the Bible describes as instruments of God.

Testament for this purpose. When David offered himself to Saul to go fight with the Philistine challenger Goliath, Saul, to give him spirit, armed him with his arms: which David, as soon as he had put them on, refused, saying that with them he could not make use of himself well, and therefore that he wanted to meet the enemy with his sling and his knife.

In the end, the arms of others either fall off you, or weigh you down, or squeeze you. Charles VII, father of King Louis XI, having liberated France from the English with his fortune and virtue, recognized this necessity to arm oneself with one's own arms, and ordained in his kingdom the ordinance of the men-at-arms and of the infantries.<sup>240</sup> Thereafter King Louis, his son, extinguished that of the infantry and began to hire the Swiss: which error, followed by the others, is, as is now evident in fact, the cause of that kingdom's dangers. Because, having given reputation to the Swiss, he has reviled all his armies; because he has extinguished his infantries and has obligated his men-at-arms to the arms of others; because, being habituated to fight<sup>241</sup> alongside the Swiss, they do not think they can win without them. From which it follows that the French do not suffice against the Swiss, and that without the Swiss they do not try against others. Therefore, the French armies have been mixed, part mercenary and part their own: which arms all together are much better than the simply auxiliary or simply mercenary, and much inferior to one's own. And let the said example suffice; because if Charles's ordinance were increased or preserved, the kingdom of France would be unsurpassable. But the small prudence of men begins something which, because it tastes good then, one does not become aware of the poison under it: as I said above of the Aetolian fever.

Therefore, whoever in a principality does not recognize evils when they are born, is not truly wise: and this is given to few. And if one were to consider the beginning of the Roman Empire's ruin, one will find it to have started in the hiring of the Goths; because from that beginning they began to enervate the forces of the Roman Empire; and all that virtue that was taken from it was given to them. I therefore conclude that no principality is secure without having its own arms; on the contrary, it is wholly obligated to

240. King Charles VII is the father of the French army and the victor in the Hundred Years' War, which ended in 1453. The nine thousand horsemen of the "*compagnies d'ordonnance*," which he formally established in 1435–36, depended solely on him, were the primary instrument by which he built the centralized, modern, French state, and are the model of all subsequent standing armies in Western civilization.

241. *Assuefatte a militare*, used in the sense of "broken" to do military things, as a horse is "broken" to be ridden.

fortune, not having virtue to defend it in adversity. And it was always the opinion and motto of wise men: “There is nothing more unstable in human things than fame or power not upheld by its own force.” And one’s own arms are those which are composed either of subjects or of citizens or of your creatures: all the others are either mercenary or auxiliary. And the way<sup>242</sup> to ordain one’s own arms will be easy to find, if one will discuss the orders of the four<sup>243</sup> mentioned above by me,<sup>244</sup> and if one will see how Philip, father of Alexander the Great, and how many republics and princes have armed and ordered themselves: upon which orders I wholly base myself.

242. *Modo*, “mode.”

243. The verb *discorrere* also means “to run over” in the sense of “to examine.”

244. Charles VII, Hiero of Syracuse, David, and Cesare Borgia.

## XIV

### *Quod principem deceat circa militiam* (What might pertain to a prince concerning the military)

Therefore, a prince must not have any objective nor any thought, nor take up any art, other than the art of war and its ordering and discipline; because it is the only art that pertains to him who commands. And it is of such virtue that not only does it maintain those who were born princes, but many times makes men rise to that rank from private station;<sup>245</sup> and conversely one sees that when princes have thought more of delicacies than of arms, they have lost their state. And the first cause that makes you lose it is to neglect this art; and the cause that makes you acquire it is to be proficient<sup>246</sup> in this art; Francesco Sforza became duke of Milan from private individual because he was armed. His children became private individuals<sup>247</sup> from dukes because they fled the discomforts of arms. Because among the causes<sup>248</sup> of evil which being unarmed brings you, it makes you contemptible,<sup>249</sup> which is one of those infamies against which the prince must guard himself, as will be said below. Because there is no proportion whatever between one who is armed and one who is unarmed: and it is not reasonable that he who is armed willingly obey him who is unarmed, and that the unarmed remain secure among armed servants. Because, there being disdain in the one and suspicion in the others, it is not possible that they work well together. And because of this, a prince who is not expert in military things, beyond other griefs, as is said, cannot be esteemed by his soldiers, nor trust them.

Consequently, he must never lift his thoughts from the exercise of war: which he can do in two ways: the one with works, and the other with the

245. *Fortuna*, “fortune,” here meaning station or rank. One’s rank or state at birth is a matter of *fortuna*.

246. *Professo*, literally, “to be a professor” — a proficient one.

247. Ludovico (II Moro), ousted by Louis XII in 1500, and perhaps Massimiliano, who reconquered the city in 1512 and lost it again in 1515.

248. *Cagioni*, also “occasions,” “reasons.”

249. I.e., worthy of being held in contempt.

mind. And as for works, beyond keeping his own<sup>250</sup> well ordered and exercised, he must always stay out on hunts, and through these inure his body to hardships, and meanwhile learn the nature of sites and come to know how the mountains rise, how the valleys open, how the plains lie, and to perceive the nature of the rivers and of the swamps, and to put the greatest care into this. Which knowledge is useful in two ways. First, one learns to know one's country and can better perceive its defenses; moreover, through knowledge and experience of those sites, [one learns] to understand with ease any other site which it might be necessary for him to think of at another time: because the hilltops, the valleys, the plains, the rivers, the swamps that are in Tuscany, for example, have certain similarities with those of the other provinces: so that from the knowledge of one province one can easily come to the knowledge of the others. And that prince who lacks this expertise<sup>251</sup> lacks the first quality that a captain needs to have; because this [art] teaches how to find the enemy, how to pick quarters, to lead armies, to arrange battles, to besiege lands to your advantage. Among the other praises which have been given to Philopoemen, prince of the Achaeans, by the writers is that in times of peace he never thought of anything but of the ways<sup>252</sup> of war; and when he was in the country with friends, he often stopped and reasoned with them—If the enemy were upon that hill, and we found ourselves here with our army, which of us would have the advantage? How could one, keeping good order, go to meet them? If we wanted to retreat, how would we have to do it? If they were to retreat, how could we pursue them?—and he proposed to them, as they traveled, all the cases which can arise in an army; heard<sup>253</sup> their opinion, spoke his, corroborated it with reasons: so that by means of these continuous cogitations no accident could ever spring up in the leading of armies, for which he did not have<sup>254</sup> the remedy.

But for the exercise of the mind, the prince must read the histories, and in those consider the actions of excellent men, see how they have carried<sup>255</sup> themselves in the wars, examine the causes of their victory and losses, to be

250. Presumably troops, but not limited to these, implicitly including all those who are "his own."

251. *Perizie* (pl.).

252. *Modi*.

253. *Intendeua*, "perceived." Here the meaning is "listened to."

254. Subjunctive. Machiavelli makes no guarantees.

255. *Governati*, "governed."



able to avoid the latter and imitate the former; and above all to do as some excellent man has done in the past, who took up imitating someone before his time who had been lauded and glorified, and always kept his deeds<sup>256</sup> and actions close to him: as is said that Alexander the Great imitated Achilles, Caesar Alexander, Scipio Cyrus. And whoever reads the life of Cyrus written by Xenophon thereafter recognizes in the life of Scipio how much that imitation was his glory and to what extent Scipio conformed<sup>257</sup> himself in chastity, affability, humaneness, liberality to those things which were written of Cyrus by Xenophon. A wise prince must imitate these similar modes and never in peaceful times remain lazy, but capitalize on it with industry, in order to be able to use it in adversity, so that, when fortune changes, it might find him prepared to resist her.

256. *Gesti*, “gestures.”

257. Subjunctive, because, of course, he conformed very little.

*De his rebus quibus homines et praesertim  
principes laudantur aut vituperantur*  
(Of those things for which men, and  
especially princes, are lauded or vilified)

It now remains to see what the modes and rules<sup>258</sup> of a prince should be with subjects or with friends. And because I know that many have written of this, I fear<sup>259</sup> being held presumptuous for writing of it again, especially since in arguing this matter I depart from the orders of others. But, it being my intention to write something useful to him who perceives<sup>260</sup> it, it has appeared to me more convenient to go after the effective truth of the thing rather than the imagination of it.<sup>261</sup> And many have imagined for themselves republics and principalities that no one has ever seen or known to be in reality. Because how one ought to live is so far removed from how one lives that he who lets go of what is done for that which one ought to do sooner learns ruin than his own preservation: because a man who might want to make a show<sup>262</sup> of goodness in all things necessarily<sup>263</sup> comes to ruin among so many who are not good. Because of this it is necessary to a prince, wanting to maintain himself, to learn how to be able to be not good and to use this and not use it according to necessity.

Therefore, leaving behind the things imagined about a prince, and discussing those which are true, I say that all men, when they are spoken of, and especially the princes, because they are placed higher, are noted for some of

258. *Modi e governi*, "modes and governments."

259. *Dubito*, "I doubt."

260. *Intende*. Note that Machiavelli does not say "a chi se ne intende," i.e., "to him who knows what he is doing." Nor does he say he wants to "dare da intendere," i.e., to put something over on the reader. Rather, he will speak straight to whomever is able to follow him.

261. I.e., than to go after that which is imagined of it.

262. *Professione*, "profession."

263. *Convieni*, it is convenient or necessary, or, by the operation of conventional society, he will come to ruin.

these qualities which bring them blame or praise. And some are held to be liberal, some miserly (using a Tuscan term, because an *avaro* in our language is still one who desires to have by rapine; we call him *misero* who excessively abstains from using his own); someone is considered a giver, someone rapacious; someone cruel, someone piteous; someone fickle, another faithful; someone effeminate and pusillanimous, the other fierce and spirited; someone humane, the other haughty; someone lascivious, the other chaste; someone simple, the other astute; someone hard, the other easy; someone grave, the other lighthearted; someone religious, the other unbelieving and such. And I know that everyone will confess that it would be a most laudable thing that a prince find in himself, of all the above-written qualities, those which are thought to be good: but because he cannot have them, nor wholly observe them, because of the human conditions which do not permit, it is necessary for him to be so prudent as to know how to avoid the infamy of those<sup>264</sup> which would take the state from him, and to guard himself against those that might not take it from him, if it is possible; but, it not being possible, one can let them go with less fear.<sup>265</sup> *Et etiam*<sup>266</sup> let him not care about incurring infamy for those vices without which he might hardly save the state; because, if one considers everything well, one will find that something that appears a virtue, if followed, would be his ruin, and that some other thing that appears a vice, if followed, results in his security and well-being.<sup>267</sup>

264. I.e., those qualities which, because of their effect on one's own *stato*, are most truly bad by Machiavelli's definition.

265. *Rispetto*, i.e., one need care less about these qualities.

266. Latin, "and also."

267. *Bene essere*. *Il bene* means "the good." *Bene essere* implies "being good" in addition to "being well."

## XVI

### *De liberalitate et parsimonia* (Of liberality and parsimony)

Therefore, starting off at the first of the above-written qualities, I say that it would be well to be considered liberal: nonetheless, liberality, used so that you may be so considered, hurts you; because, if it is used virtuously and as it should be used, it would not be known and you will not shed the infamy of its opposite. And consequently, if you want to maintain the name of liberal among men, it is necessary not to spare any sumptuousness; so that, always, a prince who does this will consume all his resources in such works; and in the end, if he wants to retain the name of liberal, he will be required to weigh down the people extraordinarily and to be *taxy*<sup>268</sup> and to do all the things that can be done to have money. This will begin to make him hateful to the subjects and little esteemed by anyone, since this makes him poor; so that, having hurt the many and rewarded the few with this liberality of his, he feels<sup>269</sup> every least unrest and is imperiled by the first danger that comes along: when he realizes this and wants to pull back from it,<sup>270</sup> he right away incurs the infamy of the miser. Therefore, since a prince cannot use this virtue of liberality without damage to himself, if he is prudent he must not worry about the reputation of miser: because with time he will be considered even more liberal, when it is seen that because of his parsimony his income suffices him, that he can defend himself against whomever makes war on him, and that he can undertake enterprises without weighing down the peoples; by which token he comes to use liberality toward all those from whom he does not take, who are infinite, and miserliness toward all to whom he does not give, who are few. In our times we have not seen great things done if not by those who have been held to be misers: the others having been extinguished. Pope Julius II, though he had used a reputation for liberality to reach the papacy, did not think to keep it later, in order to enable himself to make war. The present king of France has made many wars without placing an extraordinary tariff on his own, because his long-

268. *Essere fiscale*, i.e., to tax a lot. Machiavelli makes a lively adjective out of the verb "to be" and a word meaning "pertaining to taxes."

269. *Sente*, i.e., is vulnerable to.

270. The situation created by his liberality.

time parsimony provided for the extraordinary expenses. And the present king of Spain, if he were considered liberal, would not have undertaken or won so many enterprises.

Consequently, a prince must care little about incurring the name of miser in order not to have to rob the subjects, to be able to defend himself, not to become poor and contemptible, not to be forced to become rapacious; because this is one of those vices that allow him to reign. And if anyone were to say: Caesar achieved empire with liberality, and many others have come to the highest ranks because of having been and having been considered liberal, I answer: Either you are already a prince, or you are on the way to acquiring it. In the first case, this liberality is damaging: in the second, it is indeed<sup>271</sup> necessary to be considered liberal. And Caesar was one of those who wanted to come to the principality of Rome; but if once he had come, he had survived and had not tempered those expenses, he would have destroyed that empire.<sup>272</sup> And if one were to reply: Many who have been considered most liberal have been princes, and have done great things with armies: I answer you: either the prince spends from his own and his subjects', or from others'. In the first case he must be stingy; in the other he must not neglect any kind of liberality. And for that prince who goes out with armies, who feeds on prey, booty, and taxes and manages others' goods, this liberality is necessary to him, otherwise he would not be followed by the soldiers. And one can be a larger donor of what is not yours or your subjects'; as were Cyrus, Caesar, and Alexander; because spending that which is yours harms you. And nothing consumes itself like liberality; for while you use it you lose the capacity to use it; and you become either poor and contemptible or, to dodge poverty, rapacious and odious. And among all the things against which a prince must guard himself is being contemptible and odious; and liberality leads you to both. Therefore, there is more wisdom in keeping for oneself the name of the miser, which brings forth infamy without hatred, than to be required to incur the name of rapacious because you want the name liberal, which brings forth infamy with hatred.

271. *Bene necessario*, or "good 'n' necessary." Here goodness and necessity are coupled, as goodness and "doing well" were previously.

272. *Impero* here means both his own power and the empire over which he held power.

## XVII

*De crudelitate et pietate, et an sit melius  
amari quam timeri, vel e contra*  
(Of cruelty and pity; and whether it is  
better to be loved than feared,  
or the contrary)

Descending next to the other previously alleged qualities, I say that each prince must desire to be considered merciful and not cruel. Nonetheless, he must be wary not to use this mercy badly. Cesare Borgia was considered cruel; nonetheless, that cruelty of his had fixed up Romagna, united it, reduced it to peace and reliability. Which, if it were to be well considered, would be seen to have been much more merciful than the Florentine people, which, in order to escape the name of cruel, let Pistoia be destroyed. Consequently, a prince must not care about the infamy of cruelty in order to keep his subjects united and faithful;<sup>273</sup> because with very few examples he will be more merciful than those who, because of too much mercy, allow disorders to go on, from which spring killings or depredations: because these normally offend a whole collectivity, while those executions which come from the prince offend an individual. And among all princes, it is impossible for the new prince to escape the name of cruel, since new states are full of dangers. And Vergil says in Dido's mouth:

*Res dura, et regni novitas me talia cogunt moliri,  
et late fines custode tueri.*

(Hard things and the newness of the reign constrain me to use  
such methods and to defend the borders with vast guard.)

Nonetheless, he must be slow<sup>274</sup> to believe and to move, neither making himself the object of fear, and to proceed in a moderate way, with prudence

273. *Fede*, "faith," here means "reliable." Machiavelli is certainly not talking about forcing citizens to keep the Catholic faith.

274. *Grave*, implying deliberateness and consciousness of consequences at least as much as lack of speed.



and humaneness, so that too much confidence not make him careless and too much diffidence not render him intolerable.

From this springs a dispute: whether it is better to be loved than feared or the reverse. It is answered that one would want to be both; but, because it is difficult to force<sup>275</sup> them together whenever one has to do without either of the two, it is much more secure to be feared than to be loved. Because this can generally be said about men: that they are ungrateful, fickle, dissimulators, apt to flee peril, covetous of gain; and while you do them good, they are all yours, they offer you their blood, their things, their life, their children, as I said above, when need is far off; but when it draws near to you, they revolt. And that prince who bases himself entirely on their words, finding himself naked of other preparations, falls to ruin; because the friendships which a prince obtains for a price, and not by greatness and nobility of spirit, are merited, but they are not had and cannot be spent in time.<sup>276</sup> And men are less reticent<sup>277</sup> to offend one who makes himself loved than one who makes himself feared; because love is held by a bond of obligation which, since men are shabby, is broken for their own utility upon every occasion; but timorousness is secured by fear of punishment which never lets you go. Nonetheless, the prince must make himself feared in such a way that, if he does not obtain love, he may escape hatred; because being feared and not hated can go together very well; which he will do always when he keeps<sup>278</sup> himself from his citizens' and his subjects' possessions, and from their women: and even when he might have need to proceed against someone's blood,<sup>279</sup> he should do it when there might be convenient<sup>280</sup> justification and manifest cause; but, above all, [he should] abstain from other people's things; because men sooner forget the death of the father than they do the loss of patrimony.<sup>281</sup> Moreover, causes for taking away things are never lacking; and he who begins to live by depredation

275. *Accozzare* has two separate meanings: striking together and mingling forcefully.

276. Here, time means "at an opportune moment," "at crucial times," or "when you need them."

277. The word *rispetto* is used to imply not so much the cause as the effect of a respectful attitude.

278. Subjunctive.

279. *Sanguie* can mean life or blood relations.

280. The word *conveniente* here means both meet or pertinent (i.e., rightful) and merely convenient.

281. Patrimony is the legacy of *patres*, fathers. The following sentence is elliptical.

always finds cause to take that which belongs to others; and, on the contrary, against [human] blood the [causes to proceed] are rarer and disappear sooner.

But when the prince is with armies and rules multitudes of soldiers, then it is entirely necessary not to care about the name of cruel; because without this name an army was never united, nor disposed to any deed of arms. Among Hannibal's admirable actions is numbered this, that although he had a very large army made up of infinite kinds of men, led to fight in alien lands, there never arose any dissension, neither among them nor against the prince, in his bad fortune as in good. Which could not arise from anything other than that inhuman cruelty of his, which, together with his infinite virtues, always made him venerable and terrible in the regard of his soldiers; and without it<sup>282</sup> his other<sup>283</sup> virtues would not have sufficed him to produce that effect. And writers of little consideration on the one hand admire this action of his, on the other damn its principal cause. And that it be true that his other virtues would not have sufficed, one can see from Scipio, most rare not only in his times but in memory of things known, whose armies in Spain rebelled against him. Which sprang from nothing other than his excessive mercy, which had given his soldiers more license than was meet<sup>284</sup> for military discipline. This was reproved in the Senate by Fabius Maximus, who called him corrupter of the Roman militia. The Locrians, having been destroyed by a delegate of Scipio, were not avenged by him, nor was the insolence of that legate corrected, all springing from that easy nature of his; to the point that someone in the Senate who wanted to excuse him said how many were the men who knew better not to err than

282. His inhuman cruelty. Note that Machiavelli calls it the "principal cause" of Hannibal's "admirable actions."

283. The argument against the plain sense of the passage — Machiavelli's inclusion of human cruelty among the virtues — is given by Giuseppe Lisio in his *Il Principe di Niccolò Machiavelli* (Florence, 1921), p. 100, n. 15: "By other he means the virtues he had other than cruelty, different from cruelty. . . . I well understand there is a bit of ambiguity; but Machiavelli is not stylistically a perfect writer." Like Lisio, all who contend that Machiavelli does not intend the plain sense of the passage must argue that Machiavelli was a "writer of little consideration."

284. *Conveniva*. Here, convenience means propriety with an undertone of necessity. Scipio gave his army more leniency than was proper. In the previous paragraph, convenience means just what we mean by it: the prince can rightfully kill when the deed offers good chances of favorable results.

to correct errors. That nature, if he had persevered with it in the empire;<sup>285</sup> with time, would have blemished Scipio's fame and glory, but living under the government of the Senate, this harmful quality of his not *solum*<sup>286</sup> was hidden, but was his glory.

I conclude, therefore, returning to being feared and loved, that since men love at their own pleasure and fear at the prince's pleasure, a wise prince must base himself upon that which is his, not upon that which is other men's: he must contrive only to escape hatred, as was said.

285. *nello imperio*, meaning either "into the time of the empire" or in command.

286. Latin for "not only": mock solemnity.

## XVIII

# *Quomodo fides a principibus sit servanda* (In what way faith is to be kept by princes)

How laudable it is for a prince to keep faith, and to live with integrity and not guile, everyone perceives: nonetheless, in our times one sees by experience that the princes who have done great things are the ones who have taken little account of faith,<sup>287</sup> and who have known to turn men's brains with guile: and in the end have surpassed those who grounded themselves on loyalty.

You<sup>288</sup> therefore must know there are two kinds<sup>289</sup> of fighting: the one with laws, the other with force: the first is proper to man, the second to beasts: but because many times the first does not suffice, it is expedient<sup>290</sup> to recur to the second. Therefore, it is necessary for a prince to know well how to use the beast and the man. This part<sup>291</sup> was taught to princes covertly by the ancient writers, who write that Achilles, and many other ancient princes, were given to Chiron, the centaur, to be nourished that he might raise them under his discipline. To have for preceptor a half-beast and half-man means nothing other than that a prince needs to know how to use both natures; and the one without the other is not durable.

Therefore, since a prince is constrained by necessity to know well how to use the beast, among [the beasts] he must choose the fox and the lion; because the lion does not defend itself from traps, the fox does not defend itself from the wolves. One therefore needs to be a fox to recognize traps, and a lion to dismay the wolves. Those who simply stand on the lion do not

287. della fede means equally "of faith" (i.e., of trustworthiness) and "of the faith" (i.e., of the Christian faith). Machiavelli's reference to Alexander VI below makes clear that he considers being deceitfully un-Christian a requirement for success.

288. Plural.

289. *Generazione*, "generations."

290. *Convien*e, it is convenient, or necessary, or proper, or expedient — indeed, all of the above.

291. *Parte*, also "decision," "choice," "chosen role."

know what they are doing.<sup>292</sup> Therefore, a prudent lord cannot, nor must he, observe faith, when such observance can turn against him<sup>293</sup> and when the causes that made him promise it are extinguished. And if men were all good, this precept would not be good; but because they are sad<sup>294</sup> and they would not observe it with you, you *etiam*<sup>295</sup> do not have to observe it with them. Nor ever did a prince lack legitimate causes with which to color inobservance. One could give infinite modern examples of this and show how much peace, how many promises have been made void and vain by the infidelity of princes: and how the one who has better known to use the fox has come out better. But it is necessary to know well how to color this nature, and to be a great simulator and dissimulator: and men are so simple and so obey present necessities that he who deceives will always find someone who will let himself be deceived.

I do not want to be silent about one of the fresh examples. Alexander VI never did anything, never thought of anything other than to deceive men, and always found subjects to whom he could do it. And never was there a man who had greater success in asserting, and with greater oaths in affirming a thing, who observed it less; nonetheless, the deceptions always succeeded for him *ad votum*,<sup>296</sup> because he knew well this part<sup>297</sup> of the world.

For a prince, therefore, it is not necessary to have all the above-mentioned qualities, but it is judged necessary to appear to have them. Rather,<sup>298</sup> I will

292. "*Non se ne intendono*," idiomatic, signifying lack of specific expertise. Cf. the use of *intendere* in the first sentence of this chapter, and in the Epistle Dedicatory.

293. *Le torni contro*, "work against him." Cf. Grotius's famous rule "*Pacta sunt servanda rebus sic stantibus*," which means "Treaties are to be observed, conditions remaining the same." When fulfillment of a commitment ceases to be advantageous, the commitment is *ipso facto* inoperative. This is the modern rule for all human relationships, including marriage.

294. *Tristi*, i.e., a sad, bad lot.

295. Latin, "also," "equally." Machiavelli is investing infidelity with solemnity, and will crown his point with the papal crown.

296. Latin, "according to his desire." This is a charming portrait of a Pope who did *nothing* but deceive people, and succeeded religiously in this, since he was a master of the ways of this world.

297. *Parte* here means both "role" and "aspect." Alexander knew in an exemplary manner the secular side of the world, the side that Machiavelli is describing.

298. *Anzi* means also "even more."

be so daring<sup>299</sup> as to say this, that, having them and observing them always, they are harmful, while appearing to have them is useful; like appearing piteous, faithful, humane, integral, religious, and [perhaps even] to be; but while keeping one's spirit predisposed so that, needing not to be those things, you might know how to change to be the contrary. And let this be perceived,<sup>300</sup> that a prince, and especially a new prince, cannot observe all those things by which men are considered good, it often being necessary to maintain the state, to operate against faith, against charity, against humane-ness, against religion. And therefore it is necessary that he have a spirit disposed to turn as the winds and the variations of fortune command him, and, as I said above, not to depart from good when he can, but to know how to enter into evil when he needs to.

Therefore, a prince must have great care that nothing ever leave his mouth that is not full of the above-written five qualities, and that to see him and hear him, he appear all piety, all faith, all integrity, all humaneness, all religion. And there is nothing more necessary to seem to have than this last quality. And men in general judge more by the eyes<sup>301</sup> than by the hands; because to see is for everyone, to feel for a few. Everyone sees what you appear, few feel what you are; and those few who do, dare not oppose themselves to the opinion of many, who have the majesty of the state to defend them: and in the actions of all men and especially of princes, where there is no judgment to call upon, one looks to the results. Therefore, let a prince win and keep the state: and the means will always be judged honorable and lauded by everyone; because the vulgar<sup>302</sup> are taken by what seems and by the outcome of the thing; and in the world there are only the vulgar; and the few don't stand a chance against them when the many have someone upon whom to lean. A certain prince of present times, whom it is better not to name,<sup>303</sup> never preaches anything but peace and faith, and he is most hostile to both one and the other; had he observed both, he would have had either his reputation or his state taken from him many times.

299. *Ardirò* also means, perhaps very ironically, "I will burn." People had been burned for utterances far less subversive than the ones in the previous paragraphs.

300. *Et (Lat.) lassì ad intendere questo*. The sentence has the sense of "and get this!"

301. By means of the eyes.

302. The populace.

303. Clearly, this is the pope reigning at the time, Julius II.



## XIX

### *De contemptu et odio fugiendo* (On fleeing contempt and hatred)

But because I have spoken concerning the most important of the qualities mentioned above, I want to discuss the others briefly under this category: that, as was said above in part, the prince should think of avoiding those things which might make him hateful and contemptible; and whenever he avoids them, he will have done his part and will not find danger in the other infamies. Above all, as I said, it makes one hateful to be rapacious and usurping of the subjects' things and women: from which he must abstain; and whenever one takes neither things nor honor from the general run of men, they live contented, and one only has to fight against the ambition of the few, which one brakes in many ways, and with ease. It makes one contemptible to be held variable, light, effeminate, pusillanimous, irresolute: which a prince must avoid as he would a shoal, and to scheme<sup>304</sup> so that greatness, spiritedness, gravity, strength might be recognized from his actions, and to insist that his word be irrevocable concerning the private dealings of the subjects; and that he maintain himself in such repute that no one might think either of deceiving him or of getting around him.

The prince who gives this opinion of himself is quite well reputed; and one conspires with difficulty against whomever is reputed; provided it be perceived that he be excellent and revered by his own, he is attacked with difficulty. Because a prince must have two fears: one within, on account of the subjects, the other without, on account of external potentates. Against the latter one defends with good arms and with good friends; and always if he has good arms, he will have good friends; and always when things outside stay firm, they will stay firm inside, if yet they are not perturbed by a conspiracy; and if he has ordained and lived as I said, if he does not abandon himself, he will always bear every shock even if things outside were in motion, as I said Nabis of Sparta did.<sup>305</sup> But, concerning the subjects, when things outside do not move, one has to fear lest they conspire secretly: concerning

304. *Ingegnarsi*, to think up some ingenious scheme whereby.

305. But, of course, since Nabis, who was able to stand up to the Roman armies (Chap. XI), was assassinated by conspirators, this point is to be taken with special caution. *The Prince* is not a book of political recipes.

which, the prince assures himself sufficiently by avoiding being hated or despised, and by keeping the people satisfied with him: which thing it is necessary to achieve, as was said at length above. And one of the most powerful remedies that a prince has against conspiracies is not to be hated by the generality of men, because he who conspires believes to satisfy the people by the death of the prince; but when he believes he would offend it<sup>306</sup> [thereby], he is discouraged from taking such a part, because the difficulties on the conspirators' side are infinite. And, by experience, one sees that conspiracies have been many, and few have had a good end. Because he who conspires cannot be alone, but he can keep company only with those whom he believes to be malcontent; and as soon as you have uncovered your spirit to a malcontent, you give him material with which to make himself content, because manifestly he can hope every comfort from it;<sup>307</sup> so much so that, seeing a firm gain on this side, and seeing the other doubtful and full of danger, he must<sup>308</sup> indeed be either a rare friend, or a wholly obstinate enemy of the prince, to keep faith with you. And, to reduce the thing to brief terms, I say that on the part of the conspirator there is only fear, jealousy, and the thought of penalty which dismays him; but on the part of the prince there is the majesty of the principality, the laws, the defenses of friends and of the state which defend him; so that, when popular benevolence is added to all these things, it is impossible that anyone be so foolishly daring as to conspire. Because, ordinarily, where a conspirator has to fear before the execution of the evil, in this case he also has to fear afterward, once the excess<sup>309</sup> has occurred, not being able to hope for any refuge, since he has the people for an enemy.

One could give infinite examples of this matter. But I only want to be content with one, within the memory of our fathers. Messer Annibale Bentivogli, grandfather of the present Messer Annibale, who was prince of Bologna, having been killed by the Canneschi<sup>310</sup> who conspired against him,

306. I.e., the generality of men.

307. That is, he can expect a big reward for betraying the conspiracy.

308. *Conviene*. The sense is that he *had better be* your very good friend because it will be convenient for him to turn you in. Note that the statement below, "it is impossible that anyone be so foolishly daring . . .," is absurd on its face and contradicted by the rest of the chapter.

309. I.e., the regicide.

310. Bentivogli was killed by Battista Canneschi in June 1445 in cooperation with Filippo Maria Visconti of Milan. Note that the conspiracy succeeded. Cf. the first sentence of the following paragraph. Anyone who takes it literally deserves whatever trouble he might reap thereby.

nor any of his own surviving other than Messer Giovanni, who was in swaddling clothes, the people rose right away after that homicide and killed all the Canneschi. Which sprang from the popular good will which the Bentivogli house had in those times: which was such that, there not remaining any one of them in Bologna who could govern the state, Annibale being dead, and there being indications that in Florence there was a Bentivogli who until then was the son of a blacksmith, the Bolognesi came for him in Florence, and they gave him the government of that city: which was governed by him until Messer Giovanni could reach the age suitable for government.

I, therefore, conclude that a prince must take little account of conspiracies, when the people are benevolent toward him; but when they are hostile to him and hate him, he must fear everything and everybody. And the well-ordered states and the wise princes have thought with every diligence not to drive the great to despair and to satisfy the people and to keep it contented; because this is one of the most important matters that concern a prince. Among the well-ordered and -governed kingdoms of our times is that of France; and in it are found infinitely good constitutions on which depend the liberty and security of the king, of which the first is the parliament and its authority. Because the one who ordained that kingdom,<sup>311</sup> knowing the ambition of the powerful and their insolence, and judging it necessary that they have a bit in their mouths to correct them, and, on the other hand, knowing the fear-based hate of the general run of men against the great, and wanting to reassure them, he did not want this to be a particular care of the king. Therefore, to take from him the burden that he might have with the great when he favored the people, and with the people when he favored the great, he constituted a third judge, to be the one who would beat down the great and favor the small without burden to the king. This order could not have been better nor more prudent, nor a greater cause of security for the king and the kingdom. From this one may draw another notable thing: that princes need to have burdensome things administered by others, [while they administer] graces by themselves. Again I conclude that a prince must esteem the great but not make himself hated by the people.

It might appear to many, considering the life and death of some Roman emperors, that they might be examples contrary to this opinion of mine,

311. Of course, no one person had “ordained” the kingdom of France. Its ancient institutions had grown slowly and feudally. Moreover, the French parliaments of Machiavelli’s time did nothing of the sort that Machiavelli describes. In fact, the French monarchy rested on the king’s own army, paid by him with funds that that very army helped extract from the people regardless of parliament.

finding someone who has always lived egregiously and shown great virtue of spirit, who nonetheless lost the empire, or even<sup>312</sup> was killed by his own, who conspired against him. Therefore, because I want to respond to these objections, I will discuss the qualities of some emperors, showing that the causes of their ruin are not incongruent with what has been demonstrated by me; and in part I will offer for consideration those things which are noteworthy to whomever reads the doings of those times. And I want that it suffice for me to take all those emperors who acceded to the empire from Marcus the philosopher to Maximus: who were Marcus, Commodus, his son Pertinax, Julius, Severus, Antonius Caracalla his son, Macrinus, Helio-gabalus, Alexander, and Maximus. *Et*<sup>313</sup> it is first to be noted that, where in other principalities one only has to contend with the ambition of the great and the insolence of the peoples, the Roman emperors had a third difficulty, to have to bear the cruelty and avarice of the soldiers. Which thing was so difficult that it caused the ruin of many, it being so difficult to satisfy the soldiers and the peoples; because the peoples loved quiet, and because of this they loved the modest princes, and the soldiers loved the prince who was of military spirit, and who was insolent, cruel, and rapacious. Which qualities they wanted him to practice<sup>314</sup> on the peoples, so as to have double pay and to vent their avarice and cruelty. These<sup>315</sup> always were the ruin of those emperors who, by nature or by art, did not have a great reputation, such as to keep both in check; and most of them, especially those who came to the principality as new men, recognizing the difficulties from these two different humors, turned to satisfy the soldiers, deeming it a small thing to injure the people. Which choice<sup>316</sup> was necessary: because the princes, not being able to avoid being hated by some, must first<sup>317</sup> strain not to be hated

312. Italian *vero*, "truly."

313. Latin, "and."

314. The soldiers wanted the emperors to work insolence, rapacity, and cruelty upon the peoples.

315. These qualities. Notice that Machiavelli has shifted from arguing that polities are composed of three constituencies — the great, the people, and the soldiers — to arguing that there are only two: the peoples and the soldiers. Remember his contention that the prince must favor the people over the great. *Now he argues that the prince must favor the soldiers, soldiers who are his very own, over the people (as well as over the great) — exactly what the king of France was doing.*

316. *Parte*.

317. First only in the order of time, since Machiavelli says immediately after what is first in the order of importance.

by the general public; and when they cannot achieve this, they must devise with every effort to avoid the hatred of the most powerful publics. And therefore the emperors who had need of extraordinary favors because of newness adhered to the soldiers rather than to the peoples: which, nonetheless, turned out to be useful or not to them according to whether that prince knew how to keep himself reputed by them. It sprang from these above-mentioned causes that Marcus, Pertinax, and Alexander, being modest in life, lovers of justice, enemies of cruelty, humane and benign, all had a sad end, except for Marcus. Only Marcus lived and died most honored, because he had succeeded to the empire *iure hereditario*,<sup>318</sup> and did not have to be grateful for it either to the soldiers or to the peoples; moreover, being accompanied by many virtues which made him venerable, he always kept both the other orders within bounds [set by himself] while he lived, and was never hated nor despised. But Pertinax was made emperor against the will of the soldiers who, being accustomed to live licentiously under Commodus, could not bear the honest life to which Pertinax wanted to reduce them; because of this, having created hatred for himself and added disdain to this hatred because he was old, he came to ruin at the very beginning of his administration.

And here one must note that hatred is acquired through good works as well as by nasty ones; and therefore, as I said above, a prince who wants to keep the state is often forced to be not good; because when the constituency which you need to maintain yourself is corrupt, be they either people or soldiers or great ones, it is convenient for you<sup>319</sup> to follow its humor to satisfy it, and then good works are your enemies. But let us come to Alexander: who was of such goodness that among the other lauds which are attributed to him is this, that in the fourteen years that he held the empire, no one was ever killed by him unjudged: nonetheless, Alexander being considered effeminate and a man who let himself be ruled by his mother, and having come into contempt for this, the army conspired against him and killed him.

Discussing now, by contrast, the qualities of Commodus, of Severus, Antonius, Caracalla, and Maximus, you<sup>320</sup> will find them most cruel and most rapacious: who, to satisfy the soldiers, did not exclude<sup>321</sup> any kind of injury which might be committed against the people; and all, except Sev-

318. Latin, "by right of inheritance."

319. Italian *ti conviene*, singular, very familiar.

320. Plural.

321. Italian *perdonarono*, literally, "pardon," but obviously meaning "exclude."



erus, had a sad end. Because there was so much virtue in Severus that because he kept the soldiers friendly, he was always able to reign happily, though the people might be weighed down by him; because those virtues of his made him so admirable in the sight of the soldiers and of the peoples that the latter remained *quodammodo*<sup>322</sup> stunned and stupefied, and the former reverent and satisfied. And because the actions of this man were great in a new prince, I want to show briefly how well he knew to use the persons of the fox and the lion: which natures I say above are necessary for a prince to imitate. Severus, having recognized the indolence of the emperor Julian, persuaded his army, of which he was captain in Slavonia, that it was good for him to go to Rome to avenge the death of Pertinax, who had been killed by the praetorian soldiers; and under this color, without showing that he aspired to the empire, he moved his army against Rome; and he was in Italy before anyone knew of his departure. Once arrived in Rome, he was elected emperor by the Senate out of fear and he killed Julian. After this beginning, two difficulties remained to Severus's desire to make himself lord of all the state: the one in Asia, where Nigrus, chief of the Asian armies, had himself called emperor, and the other in the west, where there was Albinus, who also aspired to the empire. And because he judged it dangerous to uncover himself as the enemy of both, he determined to attack Nigrus and to deceive Albinus. To whom he wrote that, having been elected emperor by the Senate, he wanted to share that dignity with him; and he sent him the title of Caesar, and joined to himself as colleague by deliberation of the Senate: which things were accepted as true by Albinus. But once Severus had defeated and killed Nigrus and pacified things in the Orient, having returned to Rome, he complained<sup>323</sup> in the Senate that Albinus, hardly grateful for the benefits received from him, had perfidiously tried to kill him, and for this reason it was necessary that he go punish his ingratitude. Thereafter, he went to meet him in France and took from him the state and his life.

Therefore, whoever examines minutely the actions of this man will find him a most ferocious lion and a most astute fox, and will see him feared and revered by everyone, and not hated by the armies, and will not marvel that he, a new man, would have held so much empire: because his very great reputation always defended him from that hatred that the peoples could have conceived because of his depredations. But Antonius, his son, was a

322. Latin, "in a certain way." Note that Severus, like Cesare Borgia, was able to render his subjects "satisfied" and "stupefied." Like Borgia, Machiavelli offers him as an example to be imitated.

323. *Si querelò*, reflexive, "quarreled himself with."



man who had excellent parts<sup>324</sup> and which made him marvelous in the sight of the peoples, and welcome to the soldiers; because he was a military man and most adept at bearing any toil, despiser of every delicate food and of every other softness: which made him loved by all the armies. Nonetheless, his ferocity and cruelty were so great and so unheard of because, after infinite individual killings, he had killed a great part of the people of Rome, and all of Alexandria, so that he became most hateful to all the world; and he began to be feared *etiam*<sup>325</sup> by those he had around him: such that he was killed by a centurion, the midst of his army. Here it is to be noted that deaths such as this, which follow by the deliberation of an obstinate spirit, are unavoidable by princes, because anyone who does not care about dying can strike him; but the prince must fear them less, because they are most rare. He must only guard against doing grave injury to one of those whom he uses and whom he has around him in the service of his principality: as Antonius had done, who had killed in an outrageous manner a brother of that centurion and threatened him every day; *tamen*<sup>326</sup> he kept him as a bodyguard: which was a daring and ruinous part,<sup>327</sup> as it turned out to be.

But let us come to Commodius, who kept the empire with great ease because he had it *jure hereditario*,<sup>328</sup> being son of Marcus; and it would have sufficed him to follow in his father's tracks<sup>329</sup> and he would have satisfied the soldiers and the peoples, but, being of cruel and bestial spirit, in order to work his rapacity on the peoples, he turned to indulging<sup>330</sup> the armies and to making them licentious; on the other hand, not reserving his dignity, often descending into the theaters to fight with gladiators, and doing other things most vile and little worthy of the imperial majesty, he became contemptible in the sight of the soldiers. And being hated on one side and despised on the other, he was conspired against, and killed.

It remains to us to narrate the qualities of Maximus. This was a most bellicose man; and the armies being bothered by Alexander's softness, which I discussed above, having killed him, they elected him to the empire. Which he did not possess very long; because two things made him hateful

324. *Parte*, here "qualities."

325. Latin, "even."

326. Latin, "even so," "nevertheless."

327. *Partito*, "choice."

328. Latin, "by right of inheritance."

329. *Vestigie*, "vestiges."

330. *Intrattenere*, literally, "entertain," "favor."

and contemptible: one is that he was most vile, having previously guarded<sup>331</sup> sheep in Thrace (which thing was most well known and caused great disdain for him in everyone's regard); the other was that because, having put off going to Rome and entering into the possession of the imperial seat at the beginning of his principality, he had given the impression of himself as most cruel, since he had committed many cruelties through his prefects, in Rome and everywhere else in the empire. So that, the whole world being moved by disdain for the vileness of his blood and by hate for fear of his ferocity, first Africa rebelled, followed by the Senate with all the people of Rome; and all Italy conspired against him. His own army joined them; which [army, while] besieging Aquileia and finding difficulty in taking it, bothered by his cruelty, and fearing him less because it saw so many enemies, killed him.

I do not wish to reason either of Heliogabalus, or of Macrinus, or of Julian, who, because they were entirely contemptible, were extinguished right away; but I will come to the conclusion of this discourse. And I say that as the princes of our time govern, they have less difficulty satisfying the soldiers extraordinarily well; because notwithstanding that one has to have some consideration for them, *tamen*,<sup>332</sup> it is quickly resolved, for none of these princes have armies that are integrated with the government and administration of the provinces, as were the armies of the Roman empire. And so, if at that time it was necessary to satisfy the soldiers more than the peoples, it was because soldiers could do more than the peoples; now it is necessary to all princes, except for the Turk and the sultan, to satisfy the people rather than the soldiers, because the former people can do<sup>333</sup> more than the latter. From this I except the Turk, since he always keeps around him twelve thousand infantrymen and fifteen thousand horses, on which the security and the strength of his kingdom depend; and it is necessary for that lord that he keep them as friends before any other consideration.<sup>334</sup> Similarly, since the kingdom of the sultan is all in the hands of soldiers, it is convenient that he too keep them friends without regard<sup>335</sup> to the peoples. And you<sup>336</sup> have to note that this state of the sultan is incongruent with all other principalities; because it is similar to the Christian papacy, which one

331. *Guardato*, "looked at" and "guarded." He had been a lowly shepherd.

332. Latin, "nevertheless."

333. *Possono*, i.e., can wield more power.

334. *Rispetto*, "respect."

335. *Rispetto*, "respect."

336. Plural.

cannot call either a hereditary principality nor a new principality; because it is not the children of the old prince who inherit and remain lords, but he who is elected to that rank by those who have the authority. And since this order is ancient,<sup>337</sup> one cannot call it a new principality, because in it are none of the difficulties that are in the new ones; because even though the prince is new, the orders of that state are old, and they are ordered to receive him as if he were their hereditary lord.

But let us return to our subject. I say whoever will consider the above-mentioned discourse will see that either hate or contempt was the cause of the ruin of those above-mentioned emperors and will also recognize the reason why some of them had a happy end and the others an unhappy one, even though part of them proceeded in one mode and part in the contrary. Because it was futile and dangerous for Pertinax and Alexander, being new princes, to want to imitate Marcus, who was in the principality *jure hereditario*;<sup>338</sup> and similarly for Caracalla, Commodius, and Maximus, it was a pernicious thing to have imitated Severus, since they did not have enough virtue to allow them to follow his tracks. Therefore, a new prince in a new principality cannot imitate the actions of Marcus, nor yet is it necessary to follow those of Severus; but he must take from Severus those parts which are necessary to found his state and from Marcus those which are convenient and glorious to conserve a state that is already established and firm.

337. *Antiquato*, also “antiquated.”

338. Latin, “by right of inheritance.”

*An arces et multa alia quae cotidie a  
principibus fiunt utilia an inutilia sint*  
(Whether fortresses and many other  
things which everyday are done by  
princes are useful or useless)

To hold the state securely, some princes have disarmed their subjects; others have kept subject lands divided; some have nourished enmities against themselves; others have tried to gain those who were suspect to them at the beginning of their state; some have built fortresses; some have ruined and destroyed them. And even though one may not be able to give definitive judgments on all these things, without dealing with the particulars of states in which one must take some similar decision, nonetheless, I will speak broadly, as the subject itself requires.

Thus, there never was any reason why<sup>339</sup> a new prince should disarm his subjects; on the contrary, when he finds them disarmed, he should always arm them; because by arming them, those arms become yours, those whom you suspected become faithful, and those who were faithful keep themselves so, and the subjects make themselves partisans. And because one cannot arm all subjects, if you benefit those whom you arm, you can do [what you like] to the others more securely: and that difference in treatment which they recognize in their own regard makes them obliged to you, while the others excuse you, judging it necessary for these to have more merit because they have more danger and more obligation. But when you disarm them, you begin to offend them, you show you distrust them either out of vileness or out of little faith: and both these opinions generate<sup>340</sup> hate against you. And because you cannot stay unarmed, it is convenient that you turn to the mercenary militia, which is of the above-mentioned quality; and when it is good, it cannot be so good as to defend you against powerful enemies and suspect subjects. But, as I have said, a new prince of a new

339. Italian *che*, literally, "that."

340. *Concepe*, conceive.

principality always has ordained arms in it. The histories are full of such examples. But when a prince acquires a new state that is added to his own as a member, then it is necessary to disarm that state, except for those who have been your partisans in acquiring it; and with time and with occasions, it is necessary to render them also soft and effeminate, and to order oneself so that all the arms of your state be in soldiers of your own, who live in your old state close to you.

Our ancient ones,<sup>341</sup> and those who were esteemed wise, used to say that it was necessary to keep Pistoia with parties<sup>342</sup> and Pisa with fortresses; and by this they nourished differences in some lands subject to them to possess them more easily. This had to be done indeed in the days when Italy was balanced in a certain way,<sup>343</sup> but I do not believe that divisions ever did any good; on the contrary, when the enemy approaches, divided cities are necessarily lost right away; because the weakest part will always adhere to the outside forces and the others will not be able to bear up.

The Venetians, moved, as I believe, by the above-written reasons, fostered the Guelph and Ghibelline sects in the cities subject to them; and even though they never let them come to blood, *tamen*<sup>344</sup> they nourished these contrary opinions, so that citizens occupied by those differences of theirs could not unite against them. Which, as one saw, did not thereafter turn out as they intended; because after they were broken at Vaila,<sup>345</sup> one of those parties right away got daring, and took from them all the state. Therefore, such modes betoken<sup>346</sup> weakness in the prince, because in a confident<sup>347</sup> principality such divisions will never be permitted; because they profit him only in time of peace, by making the subjects more easily manageable; but when war comes, such orders show their flaw.

Without doubt, princes become great when they overcome the difficulties and the opposition raised against them; and therefore fortune, especially when she wishes to make great a new prince, who has greater need to

341. I.e., our forefathers. Here Machiavelli is not referring to the true ancients, the Romans, whom he deemed truly wise, but to "our" ancients, the ones who were purported to be wise by the Florentines of his time.

342. I.e., by counterposing factions to one another.

343. I.e., before Charles VIII descended into Italy in 1494.

344. Latin, "nevertheless."

345. The cities of Brescia, Verona, Vicenza, and Padua rebelled against Venetian rule after Venice's defeat at Vaila in May 1509.

346. *Arguiscono*, "argue for."

347. *Galiardo*, here used in the literal sense of cocky, self-assured.

acquire reputation than a hereditary one, it makes enemies spring up for him, and it makes him do campaigns against them so that he might have occasion to overcome them, and climb up high by the ladder that his enemies have brought him. Therefore, many judge that a wise prince must nourish some enmity when he has the occasion, so that, having suppressed it, more greatness for him might follow.

Princes and *praesertim*<sup>348</sup> those who are new, have found more faith and more usefulness in men who were suspect in the beginning of their state than in those whom they trusted in the beginning. Pandolfo Petrucci, prince of Siena, governed the state more with those who had been suspect to him than with the others. But one cannot speak broadly of this thing, because it varies according to individuals. I will only say this, that the prince will always be able to gain with very great ease those men who in the beginning of a principality had been enemies, who are the kind who need to lean upon others to bear themselves up: and they are more powerfully forced to serve him with faith, insomuch as they know it is more necessary for them to erase with works that sinister opinion which one had of them. And thus the prince always draws greater utility from them than from those who, serving with too much security, neglect his things.

And, because the subject calls for it, I do not want to leave out recalling to princes who have newly taken a state through favors within it<sup>349</sup> that they consider well what purpose<sup>350</sup> might have moved those who favored him to favor him; and if it is not natural affection toward them, but if it were only because those [who favored the new prince] were not content with [the former] state, he will be able to keep them his friends with toil and great difficulties, because it is impossible that he succeed in contenting them. And, discussing the cause of this well with examples taken from things ancient and modern, he will see that it is much easier for him to gain for himself as friends those men who were content with the previous state, and therefore were his enemies, than those who, because they were not content with it, became friends with him and helped him occupy it.

It has been the custom of princes, in order more securely to hold their

348. Latin, "especially." It is difficult to escape the feeling that when Machiavelli sprinkles his discussion with Latin, his tongue is deeply in his cheek. This is especially the case here, where he is sending yet another of his commercial messages to Lorenzo: You ought to consider employing me even though I belonged to the party that you defeated when you took power.

349. *Intrinsici di quello*, "intrinsic to it."

350. *Cagione*, "cause."



state, to build fortresses, that they might be bridle and a bit for those who might scheme against them, and to have a secure refuge from sudden attack. I laud this mode, because it has been used since ancient times:<sup>351</sup> nonetheless, in our times, Messer Niccolo Vitelli, himself has seen two fortresses undone in the city of Castello to keep that state.<sup>352</sup> Guido Ubaldino, duke of Urbino, having returned to his dominion, whence he had been chased by Cesare Borgia, ruined all the fortresses of that province *funditis*;<sup>353</sup> and judged that without them he would lose that state again with greater difficulty. When Bentivoglio returned to Bologna, he used similar measures. Therefore, fortresses are useful or not according to the times; and, if they do you good in one part,<sup>354</sup> they hurt you in another. And this part can be discussed thus. That prince who is more afraid of the peoples than of foreigners, must make fortresses; but the one who is more afraid of foreigners than of the people, must leave them out. The castle of Milan, which Francesco Sforza built there, has made and will make more war against the Sforza house than any other disorder of that state. But the best fortress that can exist is not to be hated by the people; because if the people hate you, even if you have fortresses they do not save you; because, once they have taken arms, peoples will never lack foreigners to help<sup>355</sup> them. In our times, one does not see that they have profited any prince, if not the countess of Forlì, when Count Girolamo, her consort, was killed; because by means of it she was able to flee the people's attack and wait for help from Milan, and take back the state. And the circumstances then were such that the foreigner could not help the people; but later, when Cesare Borgia attacked, the fortresses were worth little to her, and her hostile people joined with the foreigner. Therefore, then and before, it would have been more secure for her not to be hated by the people than to have had fortresses. Therefore, all these things considered, I will laud whoever makes fortresses and whoever does not, and I will blame whoever, trusting in fortresses, thinks little of being hated by the people.

351. Italian *d'antiquo*.

352. In 1482, Vitelli retook Città da Castello from the pope, and subsequently destroyed the two fortresses which the latter had built there. Security lies in political arrangements, not in masonry work.

353. Latin, "to the foundations."

354. Italian *parte*, "place" or "situation."

355. Subjunctive.

*Quod principem deceat ut egregius habeatur*  
 (What is convenient to a prince  
 that he might be esteemed)

Nothing makes a prince so esteemed as doing great enterprises and giving rare examples of himself. In our times we have Ferdinand of Aragon, present king of Spain. This one can be called almost a new prince, because from a weak king he has become the first king of the Christians in fame and glory; and if you will consider his actions, you<sup>356</sup> will find them all very great and some extraordinary. In the beginning of his reign he attacked Granada,<sup>357</sup> and that enterprise was the foundation of his state. First, he did it at ease,<sup>358</sup> and without fear of being opposed: in it he kept occupied the spirits of the barons of Castille, who, thinking of the war, did not think of innovating, and by that means he acquired reputation and power<sup>359</sup> over them, which they were not aware of. With the money of the Church and of the peoples, he was able to nourish armies and with that long war made a foundation for his militia, which thereafter honored him. Beyond this, in order to undertake greater enterprises, always availing himself of<sup>360</sup> religion, he turned to a pious cruelty, despoiling the Marranos and chasing them from his reign,<sup>361</sup> nor can this example be more miserable nor more rare. Under the same cloak he attacked Africa; did the Italian enterprise;<sup>362</sup> lately he has attacked France, and thus always he has done and schemed

356. Plural.

357. The birth of modern Spain dates from the war against Moorish Granada (1480–1492).

358. I.e., when he and his kingdom were otherwise at rest. "It" in this and the following sentence refers to the war.

359. *Imperio*, "empire."

360. *Servendosi*, literally, serving himself with, i.e., using religion as a pretext and tool, as his servant. Machiavelli could have used a less affective word. But he chose to leave no doubt.

361. Marranos means pigs. Ferdinand rid himself of those who would not eat pig, that is, of the Muslims and Jews. These were the subjects of his "pious cruelty."

362. The taking of the Kingdom of Naples in 1500.

great things, which have always held the spirits of his subjects in suspense and admiration; and preoccupied with their success. And these actions of his sprang one from another, which has never given time between one and another for men to be able to work calmly against him.

It also benefits a prince considerably to give rare examples of himself in internal governance, similar to those which are told of Messer Bernabò of Milan,<sup>363</sup> whenever the topic<sup>364</sup> arises of someone who accomplishes extraordinary things in civil life; either good or evil, and of choosing ways of rewarding or punishing; of which much will be said. And above all a prince must scheme to give himself the fame of a great man and of excellent judgment<sup>365</sup> in every action. A prince is also esteemed when he is a true friend and a true enemy, that is to say, when he comes out in favor of one against another without hesitation.<sup>366</sup> Which part<sup>367</sup> will always be more useful than to remain neutral; because if two powerful neighbors of yours come to blows,<sup>368</sup> either they are such that, one of them winning, you have to fear the winner, or not. In whichever of these two cases, it will always be more useful to you to come out openly and make a good war; because in the first case, if you do not come out, you will always be the prey of whoever wins, with the pleasure and satisfaction of the vanquished, and you have neither reason nor anything that might defend you or that might give you shelter. Because he who wins does not want suspect friends who did not help him in adversity; he who loses does not shelter you, because you did not want to rescue his fortune with arms in hand.

Antiochus had passed into Greece, having been put there by the Aetolians to chase the Romans out of it. Antiochus sent ambassadors to the Achaeans, who were friends of the Romans, to urge them<sup>369</sup> to stay in the middle, while from the other side the Romans were persuading them to take up arms for them. This matter came to be deliberated in the council of the Achaeans, where Antioch's legate was persuading them to remain neutral, to which the Roman legate answered: "Concerning what these tell you, that it

363. Barnabò Visconti gained power in Milan in 1355 by murdering his brother. He held it until 1385 by legendary cruelty, and died poisoned.

364. *Occasione*, literally, "occasion."

365. *Ingegno*, "thought" or "genius."

366. Italian *rispetto*, literally, respect.

367. I.e., choice.

368. Literally, "to hands."

369. Literally, "to comfort them."

is more convenient for you not to intervene in the war, nothing is farther from your interest; without favors, without dignity, you will be the trophy of the victor.”<sup>370</sup> And it will always happen that he who is not a friend will seek your neutrality, and he who is your friend will ask you to come out with arms. And ill-resolute<sup>371</sup> princes most often follow that neutral way in order to avoid present perils, and most often ruin. But when the prince comes out gallantly in favor of one side, if the one to whom you adhere wins, although he is powerful and you remain at his discretion, he has an obligation to you and love has been contracted; and men are never so dishonest that they oppress you with such an example of ingratitude. Moreover, victories are never so neat that the victor does not have to have some respect,<sup>372</sup> and especially for justice. But if the one to whom you adhere loses, you are sheltered by him; and he helps you while he can, and you become the comrade of a fortune that can rise again. In the second case, when those who fight against one another are such that you do not have to fear the one who wins, the prudence of taking sides is so much the greater; because you assist in the ruin of one with the help of the other who should save him, if he were wise; and when he has won, he remains at your discretion; and, with your help, it is impossible that he not win.

And here it is to be noted that a prince must take care never to join with one more powerful than himself to harm others, unless need grips him, as was said above; because, winning, you remain his prisoner: and princes must avoid being at others’ discretion as much as they can. The Venetians teamed up<sup>373</sup> with France against the duke of Milan, and they could have avoided making that team; from which their ruin resulted. But, when one cannot avoid doing it, as happened to the Florentines, when the pope and Spain went to attack Lombardy with their armies, then the prince must join for the above-mentioned reasons. Nor let him ever believe that a state can always make safe choices; on the contrary, let him think that he must make only doubtful ones; because this is in the order of things, that one never tries to avoid one inconvenience without incurring another; but prudence consists of knowing how to recognize the kinds of inconveniences, and to take the least sad for good.

370. Livy XXV, 49. Inexact quote.

371. Machiavelli could more easily have said “irresolute.” But he chose to say *mal resoluti*, badly resolved.

372. I.e., concern.

373. Italian *si accompagnarono*, literally, “accompanied themselves.”

A prince must also show himself lover of the virtues, and honor those excellent in art. Accordingly, he must influence<sup>374</sup> his citizens calmly to exercise their functions, in commerce and in agriculture, and in every other function of men, that no one should fear to adorn his possessions for fear that they might be taken from him, and that no one should fear to open a business for fear of taxes; but he must prepare prizes for whoever wants to do these things, and for whoever might think to enlarge his city or his state in whatever way. Beyond this, he must keep the peoples occupied with feasts and spectacles at convenient times of the year. And, because every city is divided into arts or into tribes, he must take into account these categories, meeting with them from time to time, himself giving examples of humaneness and of munificence, nonetheless always keeping firm the majesty of his dignity, because this should never be lacking in anything.

374. Italian *animare*, “animate” or “give spirit to.”

*De his quos a secretis principes habent*  
 (Of the secretaries which princes  
 have by them)

The choice of ministers is of no little importance to a prince: they are good or not according to the prudence of the prince. And the first estimate one makes of a lord's brain is from the sight of the men he has around him; and when they are capable and faithful, one can always deem him wise, because he has known how to recognize them as able and to keep them faithful. But when they are otherwise, one can always make an unfavorable judgment of him; because the first mistake he makes, he makes it in this choice.

There was no one who knew Messer Antonio da Vanafro as minister of Pandolfo Petrucci, prince of Siena, who did not judge Pandolfo to be a most worthy man, because he had him for his minister. And because brains are of three kinds — one that perceives by itself, another that discerns what others perceive, a third that does not perceive either [for] itself or [through] others, that first being most excellent, the second excellent, the third useless — therefore, it was necessarily convenient<sup>375</sup> that, if Pandolfo was not in the first rank, he should have been in the second: because whenever one has the faculty to recognize the good or the evil that another does and says, though he himself does not have inventiveness, he recognizes the sad and the good works of the minister and he exalts the latter and the others he corrects; and the minister cannot hope to deceive him, and keeps himself good.

But as to how a prince may recognize the minister, there is a mode which never fails. When you see the minister think more of himself than of you, and that he seeks what is useful to him in all actions, someone made that way will never be a good minister, never will you be able to trust him: because whoever has another's state in his hand must never think of himself but always of the prince, and never remember anything that does not pertain to him. And from the other side, the prince, in order to keep him good, must think of the minister, honoring him, making him rich, obliging him to himself, sharing with him honors and burdens, so that he might see that he

375. *Conveniva . . . di necessità*. Note the redundancy, and the circumlocution that follows. Again, Machiavelli's tongue is deeply in cheek.



cannot stand without him, and that the many honors might not make him want more honors, the many riches not make him want more riches, the many burdens make him fear responsibilities. Therefore, when the ministers and the princes in relation to ministers are made in such ways, they may confide in one another; and when otherwise, the end is always harmful either for the one or for the other.

## XXIII

### *Quomodo adulatores sint fugiendi* (How flatterers are to be fled)

I do not want to leave out one important heading<sup>376</sup> and one error against which princes defend themselves with difficulty if they are not most prudent or if they do not have good judgment. And these are flatterers, of which the courts are full; because men delight so much in their own things, and through them so deceive themselves, that with difficulty they defend themselves against this plague, and in trying to defend against it, one runs the risk of becoming contemptible. Because there is no other way to guard oneself against flattery, if not to get men to perceive that they do not offend you by telling you the truth; but when anyone can tell you the truth, you lack the reverence [of others]. Therefore, a prudent prince must have a third mode, choosing wise men in his state, and only to those must he give license to speak the truth to him, and of those things alone that he asks about and of nothing else; but he must ask them about everything, and hear their opinions; thereafter to deliberate alone, in his own way; and with these councils and with each member of them he must comport himself so that each recognizes that the more freely he speaks, the more it shall be acceptable to him: aside from these he should not want to hear anyone, [should] move directly to the matter that he had decided, and persevere in his decisions. He who does otherwise either falls through flatterers or changes often because of the different opinions [he hears]: from which springs a low estimation of him.

In this regard, I want to bring a modern example. Father Luca,<sup>377</sup> man of the present emperor Maximilian, speaking of his majesty, said that he took counsel with no one, and never did anything in this way: which sprang from adherence to rules contrary to the above-mentioned. Because the emperor is a secret man, he does not communicate his designs to anyone, he does not take their counsel: but as they are being put into effect one begins to know and discover them, they begin to be contradicted by those he has around him; and, since he is easy, he distances himself from them.<sup>378</sup> This is why

376. *Capo*, head or chief. He does not want to neglect an important *subject*.

377. *Pre luca*. *Pre* is a contraction of *prete*, priest.

378. *se ne stoglie*, literally, "he divests himself," that is, he sheds his own policies as people shed clothes.

the things he does one day, he destroys the next; and that one never knows what he wants to or designs to do, and that one cannot ground oneself upon his decisions.

Therefore, a prince must always take counsel, but when he wants, and not when others want; on the contrary, he should discourage<sup>379</sup> everyone from counseling him on anything, if he does not ask it of them; but he indeed must be a broad questioner, and, a patient listener of the truth concerning the things asked; even more so,<sup>380</sup> perceiving that someone is not telling it to him because of some fear,<sup>381</sup> he should become angry. And because many deem that a prince who gives the impression of being prudent is so considered not because of his nature, but because of the good counsel which he has around him, doubtless they are deceived.<sup>382</sup> Because this is a general rule that never fails: that a prince who is not wise himself cannot be well counseled, unless by chance he were to place<sup>383</sup> himself in the hands of one person alone who was a very prudent man, [who would] rule him in everything. In this case, he could well be [well counseled] but would last little, because that ruler in a brief time would take the state from him; but, taking counsel with more than one, a prince who is not wise will never have coherent counsels, nor will he know for himself how to unite them; each of the counselors will think of his own interest;<sup>384</sup> he will not know how to correct them, nor to recognize [them for what they are]. And they cannot be found otherwise; because men will always turn out sad for you, if they are not made good by necessity. Therefore, one concludes that the good counsel, regardless of where it comes from,<sup>385</sup> necessarily springs from the prudence of the prince, and not the prudence of the prince from the good counsel.

379. *torre animo*, literally, "take away spirit."

380. *anzi*, also, on the contrary.

381. *rispetto*, respect.

382. The confusion of singular and plural in this sentence, as in many others, is in the original and causes the attentive reader to strain for meaning. Not surprisingly, the following sentence is especially noteworthy, in that it contradicts all of Chap. XXII, and especially the point made after fn. 1. Indeed, the remainder of the paragraph, elliptically written, reverses the plain sense of the early part of the chapter.

383. I.e., to remit himself wholly.

384. *La proprietà sua*, meaning not "property" so much as "the things which are peculiarly his own."

385. *Da qualunque venghino*, either "from whomever" or "from whatever" quarter.

## XXIV

### *Cur Italiae principes regnum amiserunt* (Why the princes of Italy lost their states)

Prudently observed, the above-written things make a new prince seem ancient, and right away they make him more secure and more firm in the state than if he had grown old in it. Because a new prince is observed much more in his actions than a hereditary one; and, when virtues are recognized in him, they grab<sup>386</sup> men more and oblige them much more than do ancient bloodlines. Because men are taken by present things much more than by past ones, and when they find good in the present ones, they enjoy it and do not look elsewhere; even more,<sup>387</sup> when he does not fail to do the rest for himself, they will take every measure on his behalf. And thus he will have double glory, because of having begun a new principality, and adorned it and strengthened it with good laws, with good arms, with good friends, and with good examples; [even] as he who, born a prince, lost it through lack of prudence has double shame.

And if one will consider the lords who have lost their state in Italy in our times, like the king of Naples, the duke of Milan,<sup>388</sup> and others, one will find in them, first, a common defect regarding arms, for the reasons which were discussed at length above; moreover, one will see some of them who either have had hostile peoples or, if he had friendly people, did not know how to make sure of the great: because without these defects, one does not lose states that possess nerve<sup>389</sup> sufficient to keep an army in the field. Philip of Macedon — not the father of Alexander, but the one who was vanquished by Titus Quintus — did not have much state, compared to the greatness of the Romans and of Greece who attacked him; nonetheless, being a military man who knew how to favor the people and make sure of the great, he kept

386. *Pigliano*, they seize or impress.

387. *Anzi*, on the contrary, even more so.

388. Frederick of Aragon, king of Naples, fell in 1500 under the combined attacks of France and Spain. Ludovico il Moro was defeated by Louis XII.

389. I.e., so much sinew.

up the war against them for many years: and if at the end he lost dominion over some cities, the kingdom nonetheless remained to him.

Therefore, these princes of ours, who had been in their principality many years, let them not accuse fortune of having lost them, but rather their own indolence: because, never having thought in calm times that times might change (which is the common defect of men, discounting the storm during the calm), then when adverse times came, they thought to flee rather than to defend themselves; and they hoped that the peoples, bothered by the insolence of the victors, might call them back. This part<sup>390</sup> is good when others are lacking; but it is indeed bad<sup>391</sup> to have left the other remedies for the sake of that one: because no one should ever choose to fall, believing that others might pick [him] up, which either does not happen or, if it happens, it is not your security, because that strategem was vile and not dependent on you. And the only defenses that are good, are certain, are durable, [are the ones] that depend on you yourself and on your virtue.

390. I.e., this chosen path or plan.

391. Literally, "good 'n' bad."

*Quantum fortuna in rebus humanis possit, et  
quomodo illi sit occurrendum*

(How powerful fortune in human things  
can be, and how it can be resisted)

It is not unknown to me that many have had and have the opinion that the world's things are so governed by fortune and by God that men cannot correct them by their prudence, indeed that they have no remedy at all for it; and because of this they might judge that there was not much [point in] sweating over things, but [that it was rather better] to let oneself be governed by fate. This opinion has been believed more in our times because great changes in things beyond every human conjecture have been seen and are seen every day. Sometimes when I have thought of this I have been in part inclined to their opinion. Nonetheless, so that our free will not be extinguished, I judge it possible that it be true that fortune is the arbiter of half our actions, but also that *etiam*<sup>392</sup> she leaves the other half, or nearly, to be governed by us. And I liken her to one of those ruinous rivers which, when they get angry, flood the plains, ruin the trees and the buildings, take earth from this part and put it elsewhere: everyone flees before them, all yield to the impetus, without being able to bar it anywhere. And even though they are made thus, it does not follow that, when times are calm, men are unable to make provisions, with both dikes and levees, so that, when they rise, either they flow through a canal or their impetus is neither so unruly nor so harmful. It happens similarly with fortune: which shows its power when no virtue is ordained to resist it, and therefore turns its forces whereunto it knows that levees and dikes do not exist to restrain her. And if you consider Italy, which is the seat of the changes and the one which has given them motion, you<sup>393</sup> will see it to be a countryside without levees and without any dike: because if it were protected<sup>394</sup> by convenient<sup>395</sup> virtue, like Germany,

392. Latin, "even so."

393. Plural.

394. *Reparata* (past participle); cf. the noun Machiavelli uses for dike, *riparo*.

395. *Conveniente*, i.e., the virtue necessary to the particular situation.



Spain, and France, either this floodcrest<sup>396</sup> would not have made the great changes which it has, or it would not have come here. And I want this saying to be sufficient as regards opposing oneself to fortune in general.

But, restricting myself to the particulars, I say that today one sees this prince prosper and tomorrow ruin, without having seen them change nature or any quality: I believe that this arises, first, from the causes that were discussed at length above, that is to say, that the prince who leans wholly on fortune comes to ruin as [fortune] varies. I believe, moreover, that whoever adapts his mode of proceeding to the quality of the times is happy; and similarly, he whose procedure disagrees with the times is unhappy. For men proceed noticeably differently in [doing] the things which lead them to the objective that all have before them, namely, glory and riches: one with caution, the other with impetus; one by violence, the other with art; one by patience, the other with its opposite: and each can get there through these different modes. One also sees two cautious persons, one achieving his design, the other not; and similarly, two succeed equally with two different plans, the one cautiously and the other impetuously, this springs from nothing other than the quality of the times to which their procedure conforms or not. From this springs what I said, that two, operating differently, may produce the same effect; and that of two persons operating equally, one gets himself to his goal and the other not. On this also depends the variation of the good<sup>397</sup>: for, if one rules himself with cautions<sup>398</sup> and patience, and the times and conditions turn so that his rule is good, he may come out successful; but if the times and conditions change, he comes to ruin,<sup>399</sup> because he does not change his way of proceeding. Neither is anyone to be found so prudent as to know how to accommodate himself to this; whether because he cannot deviate from that to which nature inclines him, and *etiam*<sup>400</sup> because, having always prospered by walking one path, he cannot persuade himself to depart from it. And therefore, when it is time for the cautious man to come to force, he does not know how to do it; because of which he comes to ruin: because, if he changed nature with the times and with conditions, his fortune would not change.

396. *Piena*, literally, full, but meaning the flood crest of a full river.

397. *La variazione del bene*, literally, the variation of the good. In this murky passage, *bene* certainly means "circumstances." But Machiavelli chose to use the word *good* instead to signify the variation of providence, and above all the central proposition of the book (chap. XV), namely, that what is good is what is useful in any given circumstance.

398. *Rispetti*, respects.

399. *Rovina*, that is, comes to ruin, ruins himself.

400. Latin, equally.

Pope Julius II proceeded impetuously in every affair of his, and he found the times and conditions so congruent to his way of proceeding that a happy end always resulted. Consider<sup>401</sup> the first enterprise<sup>402</sup> that he did in Bologna, while Messer Giovanni Bentivogli still lived. The Venetians were not content with it; the king of Spain the same; he discussed that enterprise with France; and nonetheless, he personally moved that expedition with his ferocity and impetus. This move held Spain and the Venetians still and in suspense, the latter out of fear, and the other out of the desire he had to retake all the kingdom of Naples; and from the other side he dragged the king of France along behind him; because that king having seen him move, and desiring to make a friend of him in order to lower the Venetians, he judged he could not deny him his people without manifestly offending him. Therefore, Julius accomplished with his impetuous move what no other pontiff would have accomplished with all human prudence; because if he had waited to leave Rome until deals<sup>403</sup> were firm and all things in order, as any other pontiff would have done, [the whole thing] would never have come out for him; because the king of France would have had a thousand excuses, and the others raised a thousand fears in him. I want to leave his other actions be, which were all similar, and all turned out well for him; and the brevity of his life did not let him feel the opposite; because, if times had come when it would have been necessary to proceed with caution,<sup>404</sup> his ruin would have resulted from them: for never would he have deviated from the ways to which nature inclined him.

I, therefore, conclude that since fortune varies, and men remain in their obstinate ways, they are happy while they agree with one another, and when they disagree, unhappy. Indeed, I judge this, that it is better to be impetuous than cautious,<sup>405</sup> because fortune is a woman; and if one wants to keep her under, it is necessary to beat her and knock her. And one sees that she lets herself be won more by these than by those who proceed coldly. And so always, like a woman, she is the friend of the young, because they are less cautious,<sup>406</sup> more ferocious, and command her more audaciously.

401. Second person plural.

402. *Impresa* can also mean *presa*, "taking."

403. *Conclusioni*, conclusions.

404. *Rispetti*, respects.

405. *Respettivo*, respectful.

406. *Respettivi*, respectful. The point of the passage is: less respect, more audacity win both women and kingdoms.

*Exhortatio ad capessendam Italiam  
libertatemque a barbaris vindicandam*  
(Exhortation to take Italy and, avenging,  
free her from the barbarians)

Therefore, having considered all the things written above, and thinking to myself whether presently in Italy the times were running for honoring a new prince, and if there were the matter to give occasion to a prudent and virtuous one, to introduce therein the form<sup>407</sup> that might bring honor to him and good to the community of men in her, it appears to me that so many things concur to benefit a new prince that I do not know what time has ever been more apt for this. And if, as I said, in order to know Moses's virtue it was necessary that the people of Israel be slaves in Egypt, and to know the greatness of Cyrus's spirit, that the Persians be oppressed by the Medes, and to know the excellence of Theseus, that the Athenians be dispersed; so, at the present, in order to know the virtue of an Italian spirit, it was necessary that Italy reduce herself to the conditions in which she is at present, and that she were more slave than the Hebrews, more a servant than the Persians, more dispersed than the Athenians, without chief, without order, beaten, despoiled, torn, overrun, and having borne every sort of ruin. And even though up to now some gleam has shone in someone so that it might be possible to judge that he were ordained by God for her redemption, yet later it was seen that he was rejected by fortune in the highest course of his actions. So that, left as if lifeless, she waits for whomever might heal her wounds and put an end to the sacking of Lombardy, to the taxation of the kingdom and of Tuscany, and to heal her of her already long-festering sores. One sees how she prays God that he send her someone to redeem her from cruelties and barbarian insolences. One sees her also all ready and disposed to follow the flag, if only someone were to pick it up. Nor does one see at the present what she might hope in, more than in your illustrious house,

407. Note Machiavelli's ostentation of the Aristotelian dichotomy between matter and form.

which could put itself at the head of this redemption with her fortune and virtue, favored by God and by the Church of which it is now the prince. This is not too difficult, if you<sup>408</sup> summon up the actions and lives of the above-mentioned. And even though those men are rare and marvelous, nonetheless they were men, and each of those had lesser occasion than the present one: because their enterprise was not more just than this one, nor easier, nor was God more friend to them than to you.<sup>409</sup> Here is great justice: "War is just for those to whom it is necessary, and pious are arms when there is no hope except in them."<sup>410</sup> Here is very great potential; nor can there be great difficulty where there is great potential, provided that she<sup>411</sup> take up the orders of those I have proposed as models.<sup>412</sup> Beyond this, here one sees extraordinary things without precedent, delivered<sup>413</sup> by God: the sea has opened; a cloud has shown you the path; the rock has poured water; here manna has rained; everything has concurred in your greatness. The remainder you must do. God does not want to do everything, not to take from us free will and part of that glory which is our due.

And so it is no marvel if none of the afore-mentioned Italians has not been able to do what one can hope your illustrious house will do, and if in so many upheavals<sup>414</sup> in Italy, and in so many machinations of war, it always seems that military virtue in her is extinguished. This is because her old orders were not good, and there has been no one who has known how to find new ones: and nothing does so much honor to a man who newly arises as do the new laws and the new orders founded by him. These things have greatness in them when they are well founded, make him venerable and admirable, and in Italy matter is not lacking for the introduction of any form. Here is great virtue in the members, when it is not lacking in the heads.<sup>415</sup> Look how in duels and in the combats of the few, Italians are superior in

408. Plural or formal.

409. Plural or formal.

410. Livy IX, i.

411. The Medici house.

412. *Mira*, "aim" — models at which to aim. Recall the parable of the archer of Chap. III and recall the list of models: Moses, Cyrus, Hannibal, Cesare Borgia, Agathocles, et al.

413. Italian *condotti*, led. Here Machiavelli evokes the image of God as the supreme *condottiere*, and follows it with obvious humbug.

414. Italian *revoluzioni*, "revolutions."

415. Italian *capi*, also "chiefs."

strength, dexterity, and ingenuity. But when it comes to armies, they do not compare.<sup>416</sup> And all follows from the weakness of the chiefs;<sup>417</sup> because those who know are not obeyed, and each thinks he knows, since up to now there has not been anyone who has been able to raise himself by both virtue and fortune during so much time, in so many wars during the past twenty years;<sup>418</sup> when there has been a wholly Italian army, it has always given a bad account [of itself].<sup>419</sup> The first witness of this is the Taro,<sup>420</sup> thereafter Alexandria, Capua, Genoa, Vaila, Bologna, Mestre.

Therefore, if your illustrious house wants to follow those excellent men who redeemed their provinces, it is necessary above all things, as the true foundation of every enterprise, to provide oneself with one's own arms; because one can have neither more trusty nor truer nor better soldiers. And though each of them is good, all together they will come better, when they will see themselves commanded by their prince, and by him honored and favored. It is necessary therefore to prepare for oneself these arms in order to be able to defend oneself from foreigners with Italian virtue. And even though the Swiss and Spanish infantry are esteemed terrible, nonetheless there is a terrible defect in both, by means of which a third order could not only oppose them but be confident of overcoming them. Because the Spanish cannot withstand horse,<sup>421</sup> and the Swiss have to have fear of infantry, if in combat they meet any that prove as obstinate as they. That is why it has been seen, and will be seen by experience, that the Spanish are not able to withstand French cavalry, and the Swiss being ruined by the Spanish infantry. And, even though a complete experience of the latter has not been seen, *tamen*<sup>422</sup> a taste of it was seen on the day of Ravenna, when the Spanish infantries confronted the German battalions which serve under the same orders as the Swiss: where the Spaniards, with bodily agility and the help of

416. *Compariscono*, literally, "they don't show up."

417. *Capi*, also "heads."

418. I.e., since 1494.

419. Italian "*ha sempre fatto mala pruova*," literally, "has always made bad proof."

420. At Foronovo on the Taro River in 1495, Francesco Gonzago fought the retreating Charles VIII, who nonetheless made good his retreat. Alexandria was taken by the French in 1499, Capua in 1501, Genoa in 1507. Bologna was abandoned by the Papal Legate in 1511, and Mestre was burned by a Spanish commander in 1513. In 1509, Louis XII destroyed Venice's power on land.

421. I.e., they cannot bear up against cavalry.

422. Latin, even so.

their *brocchieri*<sup>423</sup> had come in under the pikes and were hurting them safely without the Germans having any remedy; and had not cavalry shocked them, they would have consumed them all. Therefore, the defect of both these infantries being known, one can ordain a new one, which might resist horses and not have fear of infantry; all of which the generation of armies and the changes of orders will accomplish. And these are among those things that, when newly ordained, give reputation and greatness to a new prince.

Thus, one must not let this occasion pass, so that Italy, after so much time, might see her redeemer. Nor can I express with how much love he would be received. In all the provinces which have suffered by these foreign<sup>424</sup> floods; with what thirst of vengeance, with what obstinate faith, with what piety, with what tears. How many doors would be closed to him? Which peoples would deny him obedience? What envy would be opposed to him? What Italian would deny him homage? This barbarian domination stinks to all. Let, therefore, your illustrious house take this undertaking with the spirit and with the hope with which just enterprises are taken up; so that, under her insignia, this fatherland may be ennobled by it, and under her auspices that saying of Petrarch may come true:

Virtue against furor  
will take arms; and the fighting be short:  
for the ancient valor  
in Italian hearts is not yet dead.

423. Circular, shieldlike devices with a spike in the middle.

424. Italian *esterne*, external. Not necessarily non-Italian.